

ROMANS

INTRODUCTION

Let me say just a word concerning Paul the apostle. With his writings we actually come now to a different method of revelation. God has used many ways to communicate to man. He gave the Pentateuch -- the Law -- through Moses. He gave history, He gave poetry, and He gave prophecy. He gave the Gospels, and now we come to a new section: the Epistles, the majority of which were written by Paul.

Adolf Deissmann tried to make a distinction between epistles and letters. Having examined the papyri that were found at Oxyrhynchus in Egypt, he made a decision between literary and nonliterary documents, placing the epistles of Paul in the latter category, thereby making them letters rather than epistles. However, a great many scholars today think this is an entirely false division.

These letters that we have -- these epistles -- are so warm and so personal that, as far as you and I are concerned, it is just as if they came by special delivery mail to us today. The Lord is speaking to us personally in each one of these very wonderful letters that Paul and the other apostles wrote to the churches. Nevertheless, Romans contains the great gospel manifesto for the world. To Paul the gospel was the great ecumenical movement and Rome was the center of that world for which Christ died. Paul's Epistle to the Romans is both an epistle and a letter.

Paul made this statement in [Romans 15:15-16](#), "Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God, that I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost." Paul made it very clear here that he was the apostle to the Gentiles. He also made it clear that Simon Peter was the apostle to the nation Israel. For instance, in Galatians he said, "(For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision" ([Gal. 2:8-9](#)). Therefore you see that Paul was peculiarly the apostle to the Gentiles. When you read the last chapter of Romans and see all those people that Paul knew, you will find that most of them were Gentiles. The church in Rome was largely a gentile church.

Paul also made the point that, if somebody else had founded the church in Rome, he would never have gone there. Instead, he said that he was eager to go there. "So as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the Gospel to you that are at Rome also" ([Rom. 1:15](#)). He wanted to go to Rome to preach the gospel. In [Acts 26](#) Paul recounted to Agrippa the message the Lord gave to him when He appeared to him: "Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" ([Acts 26:17-18](#)).

Further, Paul would never have gone to Rome, although he was eager to go, if anyone else had preached the gospel there ahead of him. In [Romans 15:20](#) he said, "Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation." Paul, my friend, just didn't go where another apostle had been. We can conclude, therefore, that no other apostle had been to Rome.

Now that leads me to say a word about Rome, and the question is: Who founded the church in Rome? I am going to make a rather unusual statement here: Paul is the one who founded the church in Rome, and he founded it, as it were, by "long distance" and used the "remote control" of an apostle to write and guide its course.

Let me make this very clear. You see, Rome was a tremendous city. Paul had never been there, no other apostle had been there, and yet a church came into existence. How did it come into existence? Well, Paul, as he moved throughout the Roman Empire, won men and women to Christ. Rome had a strong drawing power, and many people were in Rome who had met Paul throughout the Roman Empire. You might ask, "Do you know that?" Oh, yes, we have a very striking example of that in Acts where we find Paul going to Corinth. "After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth; and found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them. And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers" ([Acts 18:1-3](#)). Paul had met Aquila and Priscilla - their home was in Rome, but there had been a wave of anti-Semitism; Claudius the emperor had persecuted them, and this couple had left Rome. They went to Corinth. We find later that they went with Paul to Ephesus and became real witnesses for Christ. Then, when Paul wrote the Epistle to the Romans, they had returned to Rome, and Paul sent greetings to them. We do have this very personal word in Acts concerning this couple. What about the others? Well, Paul did know them. That means he had also met them somewhere and had led them to Christ. Paul was the founder of the church at Rome by "long distance" -- by leading folk to Christ who later gravitated to Rome.

Paul knew Rome although he had not been inside her city limits at the time of the writing of the Roman epistle. Rome was like a great ship passing in the night, casting up waves that broke on distant shores. Her influence was like a radio broadcast, penetrating every corner and crevice of the empire. Paul had visited Roman colonies such as Philippi and Thessalonica, and there he had seen Roman customs, laws, languages, styles, and culture on exhibit. He had walked on Roman roads, had met Roman soldiers on the highways and in the marketplaces, and he had slept in Roman jails. Paul had appeared before Roman magistrates, and he had enjoyed the benefits of Roman citizenship. You see, Paul knew all about Rome although he was yet to visit there. From the vantage point of the world's capital, he was to preach the global gospel to a lost world that God loved so much that He gave His Son to die, that whosoever believed on Him might not perish but have eternal life.

Rome was like a great magnet: It drew men and women from the ends of the then-known world to its center. As Paul and the other apostles crisscrossed in the hinterland of this colossal empire, they brought multitudes to the foot of the Cross. Churches were

established in most of the great cities of this empire. In the course of time, many Christians were drawn to the center of this great juggernaut. The saying that "all roads lead to Rome" was more than just a bromide. As Christians congregated in this great metropolis, a visible church came into existence. Probably no individual man established the church in Rome. Converts of Paul and the other apostles from the fringe of the empire went to Rome, and a local church was established by them. Certainly, Peter did not establish the church or have anything to do with it, as his sermon on Pentecost and following sermons were directed to Israelites only. Not until the conversion of Cornelius was Peter convinced that Gentiles were included in the body of believers.

Summarizing, we have found that Paul is the one writing to the Romans. He was to visit Rome later, although he knew it very well already. And Paul was the founder of the church in Rome.

As we approach this great epistle, I feel totally inadequate because of its great theme, which is the righteousness of God. It is a message that I have attempted over the years to proclaim. And it is the message, by the way, that the world today as a whole does not want to hear, nor does it want to accept it. The world likes to hear, friend, about the glory of mankind. It likes to have mankind rather than God exalted. Now I am convinced in my own mind that any ministry today that attempts to teach the glory of man -- which does not present the total depravity of the human family and does not reveal that man is totally corrupt and is a ruined creature, any teaching that does not deal with this great truth -- will not lift mankind, nor will it offer a remedy. The only remedy for man's sin is the perfect remedy that we have in Christ, that which God has provided for a lost race. This is the great message of Romans.

Friend, may I say to you that the thief on the cross had been declared unfit to live in the Roman Empire and was being executed. But the Lord Jesus said that He was going to make him fit for heaven and told him, ". . . Today shalt thou be with me in paradise" ([Luke 23:43](#)). God takes lost sinners -- like I am, like you are -- and He brings them into the family of God and makes them sons of God. And He does it because of Christ's death upon the Cross -- not because there is any merit in us whatsoever. This is the great message of Romans.

It was Godet, the Swiss commentator, who said that the Reformation was certainly the work of the Epistle to the Romans (and that of Galatians also) and that it is probable that every great spiritual renovation in the church will always be linked both in cause and in effect to a deeper knowledge of this book. It was Martin Luther who wrote that the Epistle to the Romans is "the true masterpiece of the New Testament and the very purest Gospel, which is well worthy and deserving that a Christian man should not only learn it by heart, word for word, but also that he should daily deal with it as the daily bread of men's souls. It can never be too much or too well read or studied; and the more it is handled, the more precious it becomes, and the better it tastes."

Chrysostom, one of the early church fathers, had the epistle read to him twice a week. And it was Coleridge who said that the Epistle to the Romans was the most profound writing that exists. Further, we find that one of the great scientists turned to this book, and he found that it gave a real faith. This man, Michael Faraday, was asked on his

deathbed by a reporter, "What are your speculations now?" Faraday said, "I have no speculations. My faith is firmly fixed in Christ my Savior who died for me, and who has made a way for me to go to heaven."

May I say to you, this is the epistle that transformed that Bedford tinker by the name of John Bunyan. A few years ago I walked through the cemetery where he is buried, and I thought of what that man had done and said. You know, he was no intellectual giant, nor was he a poet, but he wrote a book that has been exceeded in sales by only one other, the Bible. That book is Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. It is a story of a sinner saved by grace, and that sinner was John Bunyan. And the record of history is that this man read and studied the Epistle to the Romans, and he told its profound story in his own life's story, the story of Pilgrim -- that he came to the Cross, that the burden of sin rolled off, and that he began that journey to the Celestial City.

Let me urge you to do something that will pay you amazing dividends: read the Book of Romans, and read it regularly. This epistle requires all the mental make-up we have, and in addition, it must be bathed in prayer and supplication so that the Holy Spirit can teach us. Yet every Christian should make an effort to know Romans, for this book will ground the believer in the faith.

Outline

I. Doctrinal, [Rom. 1](#) through [Rom. 8](#) ("Faith")

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- (a) Revelation of the Wrath of God Against Sin of Man, [Rom. 1:18-32](#)
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(3) Purpose of the Law, [Rom. 3:19-20](#)

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(Righteousness of God defined -- not the character of God nor self-righteousness of man)

(a) Justification by Faith Explained, [Rom. 3:21-31](#)

(Definition: Justification is the act of God that declares a sinner righteous by faith on the merit of Christ's sacrifice. It is the addition of the righteousness of Christ as well as the subtraction of sins.)

(Propitiation -- "mercy seat" ([Heb. 9:5](#)); Redemption -- to pay a price for deliverance. Propitiation is toward God. Redemption is toward sin.)

(b) Justification by Faith Illustrated, [Rom. 4:1-25](#)

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(5) Love -- [Rom. 5:5](#)

(6) Holy Spirit -- [Rom. 5:5](#)

(7) Deliverance from the Great Tribulation -- [Rom. 5:9](#)

(8) Joy -- [Rom. 5:11](#)

(Reconciliation is toward man. Definition: Change from enmity to friendship. Justification by faith is an act of God which is permanent.)

B. Sanctification of the Saint, [Rom. 5:12](#) through [Rom. 8:39](#)

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(a) Headship of Adam, [Rom. 5:12-14](#)

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(c) Offense of Adam vs. Righteousness of Christ, [Rom. 5:18-21](#)

(Disobedience vs. Obedience; Judgment vs. Free Gift; Sin vs. Grace; Condemnation vs. Justification)

2. Positional Sanctification, [Rom. 6:1-10](#)

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4. Powerless Sanctification, [Rom. 7:1-25](#)

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- 5. God's New Provision for Sanctification, [Rom. 8:1-39](#)
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 - (c) New Man, Son of God: Holy Spirit and Spirit of Man, [Rom. 8:14-17](#)
 - (d) New Creation: Old vs. New; Bondage vs. Liberty, [Rom. 8:18-22](#)
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(God's purpose guarantees the salvation of sinners.)
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 - 2. Present Standing of Israel -- Same as Gentiles, [Rom. 10:5-12](#)
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(Thirty-five persons mentioned by name -- mutual love and tender affection)

Chapter 1

THEME: Paul's personal greetings; Paul's purpose; Paul's three "I ams"; a natural revelation of God; subnatural response of man; unnatural retrogression of man

This opening chapter is an inclusive as it embraces the introduction, the missionary motives of the great apostle, the definition of the gospel, and the condition of man in sin which necessitates the gospel. This chapter furnishes the tempo for the entire epistle.

Romans teaches the total depravity of man. Man is irrevocably and hopelessly lost. He must have the righteousness of God since he has none of his own.

It is interesting to note that this great document of Christian doctrine, which was addressed to the church at Rome to keep it from heresy, did not accomplish its purpose. The Roman church moved the farthest from the faith which is set forth in the Epistle to the Romans. It is an illustration of the truth of this epistle that man does not understand, neither does he seek after God.

[Verses 16](#) and 17 have long been recognized as the key to the epistle. These two verses should be memorized and the meaning of each word digested. The words will be dealt with individually when we come to them.

Paul's Personal Greetings (1:1-7)

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God [[Rom. 1:1](#)].

The name Paul comes from the Latin Paulus, meaning "little." (He was Saul of Tarsus but was also called Paul as indicated by [Acts 13:9](#)).

Paul identified himself to the Romans in the very beginning as a slave, or doulos, of the Lord Jesus Christ. He took the position of a servant willingly. The Lord Jesus Christ loved us and gave Himself for us, but He never makes us His slaves. You must come voluntarily to Him and make yourself His slave. He will never force you to serve Him. He said even to Jerusalem, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!" ([Luke 13:34](#)). On another occasion our Lord said, "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life" ([John 5:40](#)). It is wonderful beyond measure that you have the privilege of making yourself a bonds slave to the Lord Jesus Christ. You must do it on your own; He will not force you.

On the road to Damascus, the Lord said to Paul, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" And Paul replied, "Who art thou, Lord?" He said, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." It was at this moment that Paul came to know Him as his Savior. Then Paul's question was, "What wilt thou have me to do?" (see [Acts 9:4-6](#)). This is when Paul made himself a bonds slave of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle" -- the infinitive of the verb "to be" is not in the original manuscripts. Paul was a "called apostle" -- called is an adjective -- he means that he is that kind of an apostle. It was not his decision that made him an apostle. It was God's decision, and God called him. Paul first made himself a bonds slave of Christ, and now he is a called apostle, a witness for the Lord Jesus Christ. One whom He has chosen is the only kind of servant God will use. There are too many men in the ministry today whom God has not called. Paul could say, ". . . woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" ([1Cor. 9:16](#)). You may remember that Jeremiah was called when he was a child ([Jer. 1:4-10](#)). God said of the false prophets, "I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied" ([Jer. 23:21](#)). Jeremiah was a called prophet, and Paul was a called apostle.

Paul says that he is an apostle, which means "one who is sent." Our Lord said that he that is sent [apostle] is not greater than he that sent him (see [John 13:16](#)). The same word occurs again in [Philippians 2:25](#). The word has the technical meaning in the New Testament of one chosen by the Lord Jesus to declare the gospel. He must be a witness of the resurrected Christ. Paul said that the resurrected Christ had appeared to him. "And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time" ([1Cor. 15:8](#)). Then Paul asks the rhetorical question, "Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? . . ." ([1Cor. 9:1](#)).

Another evidence that Paul was an apostle was that he had what we call "sign gifts." He said that he could speak other languages, other tongues. I believe that when he went through the Galatian country, for instance, into that area along the Aegean Sea where there were so many Greek cities and tribes in which unfamiliar languages were spoken,

Paul was able to speak the language of each tribe as he came among them. He had the apostolic gift of tongues. Also he had the gift of healing, a gift that I do not believe is in existence today. When God heals in our day, He does it directly. I tell folk that I take my case directly to the Great Physician, not to one of the interns. I know that God heals, but He does not give that gift to men in our day. However, Paul had the gift of healing; he was an apostle. He could also raise the dead. We have records of both Peter and Paul raising the dead. They were apostles.

Now, Paul is a bondsman of Jesus Christ; he is called apostle; and he is "separated unto the gospel of God." Notice that "separated" is used with the preposition unto, not from. He was separated unto the gospel of God.

The word separated is a marvelous word. There are several words that have almost an opposite meaning. For instance, there is the word cleave. An object can cleave to something or an object can be cleaved asunder. One time cleave can mean to join together and another time it can mean to separate. Paul was a separated Christian, but he was separated to something, not from something. I am afraid that many Christians today are only separated from something. When I hear some people talk, I get the idea that they are doing a spiritual striptease. They say, "I don't do this and I don't do that anymore." Well, my friend, unto what are you separated? Paul tells us that the Thessalonians turned to God from idols. They did not get up in a testimonial meeting and say, "We do not go to the temple of Apollo anymore." There was no need to say that because they were separated unto the Lord Jesus Christ. A Christian who is separated from something and not separated unto Christ will have a barren life. His life will be without joy, and he will become critical and sometimes cynical. A phrase in the marriage ceremony I use says, "Do you promise to love and to keep yourself unto her (or him) and no one else?" This is separation unto one person. That is what marriage is. Imagine a fellow on the first night of his honeymoon saying to his new bride, "I have a girlfriend in this town. I think I will go to see her." There are many Christians who practice that kind of "separation"! If you are separated unto Christ, you will have a life that appeals rather than one that turns people off. A little Chinese girl once said, "Christians are salt. Salt makes you thirsty." Think it over, friend. Do you make anyone thirsty for Christ, the Water of Life?

The word separated is the Greek word *aphorizo*, the same word from which we get our word horizon. I have noticed when taking off on a plane that the horizon becomes enlarged. I remember a flight from Athens, Greece. When we took off, I tried to see the Acropolis and the ocean, but I could not see a thing. We had not gone far when I could see the ocean, the Acropolis, the outer islands, and the mountains. The higher we flew, the wider was the horizon. It is wonderful to be separated unto Christ because He brings you to the place where your horizons are enlarged. This is what Paul is talking about in [1Corinthians 13:11](#) when he says, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things."

I can recall a time in my early boyhood when I used to play house. Because there was a bunch of girls in the neighborhood and only a couple of boys, in order to play, we played house with the girls. There came a day, friend, when I outgrew that stuff, and I went outside and played baseball. The girls would say, "Let's play house." I would reply, "No, I am playing first base on the team. I am not interested in playing house anymore." I had

a new horizon. Today I am not only uninterested in playing baseball, I can't play baseball. But I am interested in something else. My horizons have widened. And, friend, when you are separated unto Christ, it doesn't mean you become little and narrow. Rather, life broadens out to include innumerable thrilling and wonderful experiences.

Now notice that Paul says he is separated unto "the gospel of God." In other words, man did not create the gospel. When you and I arrived on the scene, the gospel had been in existence for over nineteen hundred years. He didn't wait until we got here to see if we had a better plan. It is God's gospel. We can take it or leave it. The gospel was originated by God.

(Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) [[Rom. 1:2](#)].

The gospel is not brand new. It was promised by His prophets all the way through the Old Testament. It is a message that God loves mankind and that God presents a way of saving mankind. It brings us into a love relationship. He loves us and gave Himself for us. How wonderful!

[Verses 2-6](#) form a parenthesis which gives a definition of the gospel. First of all, it is all about Jesus Christ.

Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh [[Rom. 1:3](#)].

The word concerning is the little Greek preposition peri -- used also in periscope and perimeter -- and means "that which encircles." The gospel is all about Jesus Christ. It is what He has done. It is "concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord."

We have His full title here. He is the Son of God, and He is Jesus Christ our Lord. That is His wonderful name. We often hear today that we need the religion of Jesus. My friend, He had no religion. He didn't need one -- He is God. What we need today is to have a religion that is about Jesus, that surrounds Him, that is all about what He has done. Jesus Christ actually is God. He cannot worship; He is to be worshiped. Somebody objects, "But He prayed." Yes, because He took the place of humanity. He prayed as a means of accommodation. For instance, at the grave of Lazarus the Bible says, ". . . Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me" ([John 11:41-42](#)). My friend, He prayed to help our faith, but He is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice that He also is of the seed (the sperm) of David, according to the flesh. This is the humanity of Jesus. He is virgin-born because He is declared -- horizoned out to be -- the Son of God with power.

And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead [[Rom. 1:4](#)].

You see, the Resurrection did not make Him the Son of God; it simply revealed who He was.

Declared is from the same Greek word horizo, which we have seen before. Jesus is declared, He is horizoned, the Son of God. This gives us the perfect humanity of Christ and the perfect deity of Christ. One of the oldest creeds in the church states that He is very man of very man and that He is very God of very God. And Paul said it before the creed was written. Here it is. Jesus Christ is not any more man because He is God, and He is not any less God because He is man. He is God-man.

He is declared to be the Son of God "according to the spirit of holiness." This could mean the human spirit of Jesus, but I personally believe the reference is to the Holy Spirit. I believe the Trinity is in view here.

Now notice that He is declared to be the Son of God "by the resurrection from the dead." The Resurrection proves everything. It is Resurrection that sets Him forth as the Son of God. As you read through the Bible you will discover that the Lord Jesus Christ is presented in the power of His resurrection. First He is seen in the days of His flesh, walking upon the earth, despised and rejected of men. He is seen even in weakness as He sits down to rest at a well and as He sleeps through a storm on the sea. And He finally is brought to ignominy and shame and death upon a cross. Although He was a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief, there came a time when He was raised from the dead. His resurrection proves that He was accurate when He said, ". . . Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world" ([John 8:23](#)). The days of walking along the dusty roads of Israel are over now; He has come back from the dead in mighty power. His resurrection proves His virgin birth. He is the Son of God with power.

Then there is another great truth here. We see Christ, resurrected and presently seated at the right hand of God in the heavens, interceding today for believers and giving them power and comfort. There is a Man in the glory, but the church has lost sight of Him. We need to recover our awareness of Him. Are you having personal contact with the living Christ today?

Also the resurrection of Christ insures that He will return to this earth as the Judge and as the King of kings and Lord of lords. He will put down sin, and He will reign in righteousness on this earth. He will judge mankind, as Paul said to those glib, sophisticated Athenian philosophers, ". . . we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: because he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" ([Acts 17:29-31](#)). It is a most solemn fact that because Jesus Christ came back from the dead, you will have to stand before Him someday. Will you stand before Him as one who has trusted Him as your Savior, or will you stand before Him to be judged? If you have not received Him as your Savior, the condemnation of God must be upon you. You cannot stand before Him in your own righteousness. You must be condemned to a lost eternity unless you trust Him as your Savior. The Resurrection is the guarantee that each one of us is going to have to face the Lord Jesus Christ.

By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name [[Rom. 1:5](#)].

"Grace and apostleship" are significant terms. "Grace" is God's method of salvation. None of us could ever have been saved if God had not been gracious. Although "apostleship" referred specifically to Paul and the others who were technically apostles, every believer is a "sent one." The word in the Greek is apostole, meaning "a sending forth." Every believer should be a witness, one sent forth with a message. What are you doing to get the Word of God out in these days? That is the business of those who have received grace and apostleship.

For the "obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name -- this epistle opens with obedience and closes with obedience. In the final chapter Paul says, "For your obedience is come abroad unto all men" ([Rom. 16:19](#)), also "made known to all nations for the obedience of faith" ([Rom. 16:26](#)). Obedience to the faith is very important to God. God saves us by faith, not by works; but after He has saved us, He wants to talk to us about our works, about our obedience to Him. I hear many people talk about believing in Jesus, then they live like the Devil and seem to be serving him. My friend, saving faith makes you obedient to Jesus Christ.

Is there a difference in faith? There surely is. The difference is in the object of your faith. For example, I believe in George Washington. I consider him a great man, our first president, the father of our country. Also, I believe in Jesus Christ. Now my faith in George Washington has never done anything for me. It has nothing to do with my salvation and has very little effect upon my life. But my faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is quite different. "Saving faith" brings us to the place where we surrender to the Son of God who loves us and gave Himself for us. While correct doctrine is very important, there is a discipline and a doing that goes with it. You can't be the salt of the earth without combining both of them. By the way, have you ever considered that salt is composed of sodium and chloride, and each taken by itself would poison you? However, when they are combined, they form a very useful ingredient. Believing and doing go together, my friend, to make us the salt of the earth. My favorite hymn has always been "Trust and Obey," by Rev. J. H. Sammis.

But we never can prove The delights of His love, Until all on the altar we lay,
For the favor He shows, And the joy He bestows, Are for them who will trust and obey.
Trust and obey, for there's no other way To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ [[Rom. 1:6](#)].

The called are the elect. Who are the called? Well, they are those who have heard. The Lord Jesus made it clear when He said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" ([John 10:27](#)). If you are following someone or something else, you haven't heard Him, you are not one of His sheep. The ones who hear and follow Him are the called ones. Let's not argue about election. It is as simple as this: He calls, and you answer. If you have answered, you are among the elect, one of "the called of Jesus Christ." Paul assures the Roman Christians that they are called ones.

This concludes the profound parenthesis in the introduction to this letter to the Romans. Dr. James Stifler calls our attention to four features of this parenthesis: Paul has a

message in accord with the Scriptures; the message is from the risen Christ; the message is universal; and the message is for the obedience to the faith.

Now Paul returns to the introduction proper:

To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ [[Rom. 1:7](#)].

"Beloved of God" -- isn't that lovely? God loved those believers in Rome. When I was there not long ago, there was a strike going on, and I found it a little difficult to love anybody as I was carrying my own suitcases up to my room and unable to get any kind of service -- even a taxi. But God loves us. How wonderful!

"Called to be saints" should be simply "called saints" -- the verb to be is not in the better manuscripts. They were "called saints" and this is the name for every believer. A saint is not one who has been exalted; a saint is one who exalts Jesus Christ. A person becomes a saint when Jesus Christ becomes his Savior. There are only two classes of people in the world: the saints and the ain'ts. If you are not an ain't, then you're a saint. And if you are a saint, you have trusted Christ. It is not your character that makes you a saint, it's your faith in Jesus Christ and the fact that you are set apart for Him. As Paul said of himself in the beginning, he was a bonds slave of Jesus Christ.

"Grace and peace" constitute the formal introduction in all of Paul's letters. Grace (charis) was the gentile form of greeting, while peace (shalom) was the Jewish form of greeting. Paul combined them.

Paul's Purpose (1:8-13)

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world [[Rom. 1:8](#)].

Word had filtered out throughout the empire that many in Rome were turning to Christ -- so much so that it disturbed the emperors. Later on, persecution began. Paul mentions here that their faith was spoken of throughout the whole world.

I wonder about your group, your church. Has anybody heard about your personal testimony? What is it worth today? My, what a testimony this church in Rome had at the beginning!

For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers [[Rom. 1:9](#)].

"The gospel of his Son" -- in the first verse Paul called it "the gospel of God," and later he will call it his gospel.

"Without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers." Paul had a long prayer list. When I was teaching in a Bible institute, I gave the students the assignment of recording each time Paul said he was praying for somebody. Many of the students were deeply impressed at the length of Paul's prayer list. He says here that he prayed without ceasing for the Roman believers.

Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you [[Rom. 1:10](#)].

Paul is praying for a "prosperous journey" to come to Rome. When we read about his journey in the Book of Acts, it doesn't look exactly prosperous -- he went as a prisoner, he got into a terrific storm at sea, the ship was lost, and he was bitten by a viper when he made it to land. Yet it was a prosperous journey.

He says he wants to come to Rome "by the will of God." I believe he went there by the will of God.

For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established [[Rom. 1:11](#)].

He wants to come to Rome to teach the Word of God. Paul loved to teach the Word of God. When a preacher does not want to teach the Word of God, he becomes a clergyman, he becomes an administrator, he becomes a promoter, but he is not a minister of the Word anymore. I know several men in this position. One man said, "I don't enjoy preaching anymore." I said, "For goodness sake, get out of the ministry. You have no business in the ministry if you don't love to teach the Word of God!"

That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me [[Rom. 1:12](#)].

In other words, Paul would communicate something, but the believers in Rome would also communicate something to him. They would be mutually blessed in the Word. Not too long ago I had the privilege of speaking to a conference of over a thousand students. I laid it on the line for those folk and was a little hard on them at the beginning. Then I saw how wonderfully they responded, and it opened my eyes to a new world. I left that conference singing praises to God for the privilege of being there. While I was ministering to them, they were ministering to me. This is what Paul is talking about here.

Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that often-times I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles [[Rom. 1:13](#)].

He was hindered from coming to them, although he longed to come. Many of these folk were his converts, as he had led them to Christ when he had met them in different parts of the Roman Empire. His desire to have "fruit among you" probably does not refer to soul winning, but to the fruit of the Spirit in the lives of believers (see [Gal. 5:22-23](#)).

Paul's Three "I Ams" (1:14-17)

I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise [[Rom. 1:14](#)].

"To the Greeks, and to the Barbarians" was the Greek division of all mankind. The Greeks were cultured, educated, and civilized. The barbarians were those whom we label pagan and heathen today. Actually, it is a false division, but it encompasses all mankind and was understood by Romans.

Paul said, "I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians." How did he become indebted? Did he run up a bill for neckties and shoes (that is what Rome is famous for today) and forget to pay the bill? No, he had had no business transaction with these people. However, he had had a personal transaction with Jesus Christ which put him in debt to every man, because the grace of God had been so bountifully bestowed upon him. Paul was in debt to a lost world. I hear Christians say, "I pay my honest debts." Do you? Not until every person has heard the gospel of Jesus Christ have you and I paid our honest debts. One day I was driving with a preacher friend of mine in the interior of Turkey. (Turkey is closed to the gospel -- a person can get into trouble even propagandizing there.) As we were driving along, we came to a little town in which all of the signs were in Turkish, and we felt very much like strangers in a strange land. Then way down at the end of the street we saw a big sign which read: "Coca-Cola." I said to my friend, "Is it not interesting that Coca-Cola in just a few years has done a better job of advertising and getting out its message than has been done with the gospel in over nineteen hundred years?" We have not paid our debt, friend, until all have heard the good news, and multitudes have not yet heard. Paul says, "I am debtor," and that was another reason he wanted to come to Rome.

Then Paul has another "I am."

So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you
that are at Rome also [[Rom. 1:15](#)].

Paul has said that he is a debtor; now he says he is ready to pay. In other words, Paul says, "My side is ready." In The Epistle to the Romans Dr. James Stifler writes, "He is a master of his purpose, but not of his circumstances." He is not only ready, he is eager to preach it. Oh, how we need that enthusiasm and high anticipation of getting out the Word of God!

In the next verse we have the third "I am" of Paul. Also [verses 16](#) and 17 give us the key to this great Epistle to the Romans.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of
God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first,
and also to the Greek [[Rom. 1:16](#)].

"I am not ashamed of the gospel" ("of Christ" is not in the better manuscripts). Paul says, "I am debtor. . . . I am ready. . . . I am not ashamed." I am a debtor -- that is admission; I am ready -- remission; I am not ashamed -- submission. These are the three "missions" of Paul: admission, remission, and submission.

Why did Paul say, "I am not ashamed of the gospel"? As I walked down the streets of Ephesus and looked at the ruins of marble temples, I realized that there was not a church building in Ephesus in the first century. In Ephesus was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, the gorgeous temple of Diana (or Artemis), but there was no church building. I suppose there were folk in Rome who were saying, "Well, brother Paul hasn't come to Rome because he is just preaching a message geared for poor people. The message he preaches is without prestige; there are no great temples connected with it. He

would be ashamed to bring it to an important place like Rome." So Paul says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel."

Now why is Paul not ashamed of the gospel? "It is the power of God"! The Greek word translated "power" is *dunamis*, from which we get our word dynamite. It is *dunamis* power! It is the kind of power Dr. Marvin R. Vincent calls divine energy! In itself the gospel has power, innate power.

It has power for a very definite thing: "It is the power of God unto salvation." That is the end and the effect of the gospel. "Salvation" is the all-inclusive term of the gospel, and it simply means "deliverance." It embraces everything from justification to glorification. It is both an act and a process. It is equally true that I have been saved, I am being saved, and I shall be saved.

The gospel is "to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." It's to everyone. It includes the entire human race, irrespective of racial or religious barriers. And it is personal; it is directed to every individual -- "whosoever will may come."

It is universal in scope, but it is limited to "every one that believeth." This statement wraps up election and free will in one package. The only way of procuring salvation is by personal faith.

"To the Jew first, and also to the Greek" does not imply that the Jew has top priority to the gospel today. The important thing is to make sure the Jew is on a par with the Gentile as far as evangelism is concerned. Chronologically the gospel went to the Jew first. If you had been in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost, you would have seen an altogether Jewish meeting. And Paul in his missionary journeys took the gospel first to the Jewish synagogue, but in [Acts 13:46](#) we are told, "Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." The gospel began in Jerusalem, a Jewish city, then spread to Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Dr. Stifler calls our attention to three very pertinent truths in this verse: the effect of the gospel -- salvation; the extent -- it is worldwide -- to everyone; the condition -- faith in Jesus Christ.

For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith:
as it is written, The just shall live by faith [[Rom. 1:17](#)].

"A righteousness from God is being revealed" is a literal translation. It should not be the righteousness of God, because that would be His attribute, and God is not sharing His attribute with anyone. It is a righteousness, and it is from God; it is not man's righteousness. God has already said that He will not accept the righteousness of man, for the righteousness of man is as filthy rags in His sight according to [Isaiah 64:6](#). Paul is talking about the imputed righteousness of Christ. God places a lost sinner in Christ, and He sees him in Christ. The believer is absolutely accepted because of what Christ has done for him. The only method of procuring this righteousness is by faith. It is a by-faith righteousness. You can't work for it; you can't make a deposit on it; you can't buy it. You can do nothing but accept it by faith. "And be found in him, not having mine own

righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" ([Phil. 3:9](#)).

The word for "righteousness" is *dikaiosune*. This word occurs ninety-two times in the New Testament, thirty-six times in Romans. The phrase "a righteousness from God" occurs eight times in this epistle. The root word *dike* means simply "right." Justice and justify come from the same word. "To be right" is the primary meaning, which is the antonym of sin. Dr. Cremer gives this apt definition: "It is the state commanded by God and standing the test of His judgment; the character and acts of a man approved of Him, in virtue of which the man corresponds with Him and His will as His ideal and standard." The righteousness he is talking about is what God demands, and it is what God provides - it is a righteousness that is from God.

"From faith to faith" simply means out of faith into faith. God saves you by faith, you live by faith, you die by faith, and you'll be in heaven by faith. Let me use a homely illustration. Quite a few years ago I was born deep in the heart of Texas. When I was born, my mother said the doctor lifted me up by my heels, gave me a whack, and I let out a cry that could be heard on all four borders of that great state. I was born into a world of atmosphere and that whack started me breathing. From that day to this I have been breathing atmosphere. From air to air, from oxygen to oxygen. Much later, in the state of Oklahoma, I was born again. I was saved by faith, and from that time on it has been by faith -- from faith to faith.

"As it is written" refers to [Habakkuk 2:4](#), where the statement is made, "... the just shall live by his faith." This is quoted in three great epistles of the New Testament: Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews.

"The just shall live by faith" -- justification by faith means that a sinner who trusts Christ is not only pardoned because Christ died, but he also stands before God complete in Christ. It means not only subtraction of sin, but addition of righteousness. He "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" ([Rom. 4:25](#)) -- that we might stand before God complete in Christ.

The act of God in justification by faith is not an arbitrary decision on His part. He does not disregard His holiness and His justice. Since God saves us by grace, this means that there is no merit in us. He saves us on no other ground than that we trust Jesus. God is in danger of impugning His own justice if the penalty is not paid. He is not going to open the back door to heaven and slip sinners in under cover of darkness. But because He loves you, Christ died for you to make a way. The Lord Jesus Christ is the way to heaven. Since Christ paid the penalty for our sin, salvation is ours "through faith in his blood" ([Rom. 3:25](#)). The hymn writer is correct --

Jesus paid it all, All to Him I owe; Sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow.

This concludes Paul's introduction. Now he begins a new section in which he reveals the sin of man. My friend, this is "sinnerama." The universal fact is that man is a sinner. The ecumenical movement is always away from God. We can put down the axiom that the world is guilty before God; all need righteousness. In this section Paul is not attempting

to prove that man is a sinner. If you attempt to read it that way, you will miss the point. All Paul is doing is stating the fact that man is a sinner. He not only shows that there is a revelation of the righteousness of God, but that there is also the revelation of the wrath of God against the sin of man.

A Natural Revelation Of God (1:18-20)

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness [[Rom. 1:18](#)].

"The wrath of God is revealed." Actually, if you want to know what salvation really is, you have to know how bad sin is. Stifler says, "Sin is the measure of salvation." The wrath of God is God's feeling, not His punishment of sin. It is His holy anger. Wrath is the antithesis of righteousness, and it is used here as a correlative.

"Is being revealed" is God's answer to those who assert that the Old Testament presents a God of wrath, while the New Testament presents a God of love. There is a continuous revelation of the wrath of God in both the Old Testament and New Testament. It is revealed in our contemporary society. This is God's constant and insistent displeasure with evil. He changes not. God is merciful, not because He is lenient with the sinner, but because Christ died. The gospel has not changed God's attitude toward sin. The gospel has made it possible to accept the sinner. The sinner must have either the righteousness or the wrath of God. Both are revealed from heaven. And you can see it on every hand. If you want to know how bad sin is, look at the cases of venereal diseases today. You don't get by with sin, my friend. I won't give personal illustrations, but I have been a pastor long enough to see again and again the judgment of God upon sin. It is revealed from heaven. Also there will be a final judgment.

"Against all ungodliness" -- ungodliness is that which is against God. It is that which denies the character of God. Oh, the irreligiousness of today! There are multitudes of people who disregard the very existence of God -- that is a state of the soul. That is sin.

"Unrighteousness" is against man. Ungodliness is against God, but unrighteousness is against man. What does that mean? It is the denial of the rule of God. It is the action of the soul. That man who gets drunk, goes out on the freeway, breaks the traffic laws, and kills someone -- that man is unrighteous. He is sinning against man. Another example is the man who is dishonest in his business dealings. God hates man's unrighteousness. He will judge it.

"Who holds the truth in unrighteousness" is literally to hold down, suppress the truth in unrighteousness. The wrath of God is revealed against folk who do this.

Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them [[Rom. 1:19](#)].

There is an original revelation from God.

For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even

his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse
[Rom. 1:20].

This universe in which you and I live tells two things about God: His person and His power. This has been clearly seen from the time the world was created. How can invisible things be seen? Paul makes this a paradox purposely to impress upon his readers that the "dim light of nature" is a man-made falsehood. Creation is a clear light of revelation. It is the primary revelation. The psalmist said, "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained" (Ps. 8:3). Also "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork" (Ps. 19:1).

"His eternal power and Godhead" -- His eternal power and deity, power and person. Creation reveals the unchangeable power and existence of God. Paul said this, ". . . he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:17). And because all of us are the offspring (not the sons) of God, Paul said, "Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device" (Acts 17:29). Dr. James Denny writes, "There is that within man which so catches the meaning of all that is without as to issue in an instinctive knowledge of God." I think the most ridiculous position man can hold is that of atheism. It is illogical and senseless. When the psalmist said, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Ps. 14:1), the word for fool means "insane." A man is insane when he denies the existence of God.

"So that they are without excuse." Creation so clearly reveals God that man is without excuse. This section reveals the historical basis of man's sin. It did not come about through ignorance. It was willful rebellion in the presence of clear light.

Subnatural Response Of Man (1:21-23)

If you examine the next few verses carefully, you will see that there are seven steps which mankind took downward from the Garden of Eden.

Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God,
neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and
their foolish heart was darkened.

Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image
made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts,
and creeping things [Rom. 1:21-23].

There is no such thing as man moving upward. These verses contradict the hypothesis of evolution. Man is not improving physically, morally, intellectually, or spiritually. The pull is downward. Of course this contradicts all the anthologies of religion that start with man in a very primitive condition as a caveman with very little intellectual qualities and move him up intellectually and begin moving him toward God. This is absolute error. Man is moving away from God, and right now the world is probably farther from God than at any time in its history. The fact of the matter is that every primitive tribe has a tradition that way back in the beginning their ancestors knew God. Dr. Vincent in Word

Studies in the New Testament says, "I think it may be proved from facts that any given people, down to the lowest savages, has at any period of its life known far more than it has done: known quite enough to have enabled it to have got on comfortably, thriven and developed, if it had only done what no man does, all that it knew it ought to do and could do." No people have ever lived up to the light that they have had. Although they had a knowledge of God, they moved away from Him.

"They glorified him not as God." They did not give Him His rightful place, and man became self-sufficient. In our day man has made the announcement that God is dead. In the beginning the human family did not suggest that God was dead, they simply turned their backs upon Him and made man their god.

"Neither were thankful." Ingratitude is one of the worst sins there is. You recall that the Lord Jesus healed ten lepers, but only one returned to thank Him. Only ten percent were thankful, and I believe it is less than that today.

"Became vain in their imaginations" -- they even concocted a theory of evolution.

"Their foolish heart was darkened." They moved into the darkness of paganism. You see living proof of this as you walk down the streets of Cairo in Egypt or of Istanbul in Turkey. In fact, all you have to do is walk down the streets of Los Angeles to know that man's foolish heart is darkened.

"Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." The wisdom of man is foolishness with God. Man searches for truth through logical reasoning but arrives at a philosophy that is foolish in God's sight.

"And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things." Have you noted that the unsaved world has made caricatures of God? Look at the images and the idols of the heathen. I was aware of this during my visit to the ruins of the ancient city of Ephesus. That city in the Roman Empire reached probably the highest degree of culture in civilization that any city has ever reached. Yet at the heart of that city was one of the most horrible images imaginable, enshrined in the temple of Artemis, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Called also Diana, she was not the lovely image you see in Greek sculptures. She is like the oriental Cybele, the mother goddess, the many-breasted one. She had a trident in one hand and in the other a club -- she was a mean one. That is the idea the most cultured, civilized people had of God! She was a female principal, and gross immorality took place around her temple, and dishonesty of the worst sort. They had turned the glory of the uncorruptible God into the likeness of an image of corruptible man. Actually, idolatry is a cartoon of God; it is a slander and a slur against Him. Personally, I do not like to see pictures of Jesus, as Paul said that we know Him no longer after the flesh (see [2Cor. 5:16](#)). He is the glorified Christ. He is not that picture you have hanging on your wall, my friend. If He came into your room, you would fall on your face before Him. He is the glorified Christ today. Don't slur our God by having a picture of Him! The Greeks made their gods like men; the Assyrians and the Egyptians and the Babylonians made their gods like beasts and birds and creeping things. I walked through the museum in Cairo and looked at some of the gods they had made. They are not very flattering representations, I can assure you.

Man did not begin in idolatry. The savage of today is very unlike primitive man. Primitive man was monotheistic; idolatry was introduced later. In the Word of God the first record we have of idolatry is in connection with Rachel stealing her father's idols ([Gen. 31](#)). Man descended downward; he did not develop upward. Religiously man has departed from God. Sir William Ramsay, who was once a belligerent unbeliever, wrote in The Cities of Paul: "For my own part, I confess that my experience and reading show nothing to confirm the modern assumptions in religious history, and a great deal to confirm Paul. Whatever evidence exists, with the rarest exceptions, the history of religion among men is a history of degeneration. . . . Is it not the fact of human history that man, standing alone, degenerates; and that he progresses only where there is in him so much sympathy with and devotion to the Divine life as to keep the social body pure and sweet and healthy?" My friend, the reason today there is failure in our poverty programs and health programs and other social programs is because of gross immorality and a turning away from God. They say, "We want to be practical, and we do not want to introduce religion." That's the problem. The only practical thing for man to do is to return to the living and true God.

Unnatural Retrogression Of Man (1:24-32)

Now we see the results of man's revolution against God. In the remainder of this chapter it says three times that God gave them up.

Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves [[Rom. 1:24](#)].

Man's degeneration is measured by his perversion of sex. While many churches in our day are espousing sex perversion instead of condemning it, God says He has given them up. Idolatry and gross immorality are the bitter fruits of rejecting God's revelation.

"God gave them up" is literally God handed them over -- it is positive, not a passive attitude.

Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen [[Rom. 1:25](#)].

"Who exchanged the true God for the lie." The suggestion is that they turned from God to Satan, the author of the lie and the father of idolatry. This is idolatry which led to the lowest depths of moral degradation.

For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:

And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet [[Rom. 1:26-27](#)].

These are passions of dishonor and disgrace and depravity -- regardless of what public opinion is today. Perversion entered into Greek life, and it brought Greece down to the dust. Go over there and look at Greece today. The glory has passed away. Why? These were their sins.

And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient [[Rom. 1:28](#)].

Anybody who tells me that he can be a child of God and live in perversion, live in the thick mire of our contemporary permissiveness, is not kidding anyone but himself. If he will come to Christ, he can have deliverance.

The next three verses list a frightful brood of sins which follow man's rebellion against God.

Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,

Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,

Without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful [[Rom. 1:29-31](#)].

In my book Reasoning Through Romans, I define these sins, but it is enough to say here that this is what the human family is doing today. I used to tell the students in my classes to buy any of our metropolitan daily newspapers, sit down, and find a headline for every sin that is mentioned here. This is the condition, not only in Cairo, not only of Calcutta, not only of Beijing, but also of the United States today. How much longer will God tolerate it and be patient with us? He has judged great nations in the past who have gone in this direction.

Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them [[Rom. 1:32](#)].

Man has a revelation from God, but he flagrantly flaunts it by defying the judgment of God against such sins. He continues to practice them and applauds and approves those who do the same.

Chapter 2

THEME: God will judge self-righteous and religious people

In this chapter Paul is showing that God will judge self-righteous and religious people. There are many people like the man on the top of the hill who looks down at the man at the bottom of the hill and says, "Something should be done for that poor fellow. We ought to start a mission down there. We should start giving him soup and clothes and a shower bath. I am living on the top of the hill, and I do not need anything." The hurdle to meet the demands of God is just as high on top of the hill as it is at the bottom of the hill.

The only difference is that the man at the bottom of the hill will probably see his need sooner than the man at the top of the hill. Religious people, self-righteous people, and so-called good people need a Savior. In chapter 2 Paul sets down certain principles by which God is going to judge "good" people. Chapter 1 reveals the unrighteousness of man, and chapter 2 reveals the self-righteousness of man.

Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things [[Rom. 2:1](#)].

This puts before us the very important issue of this chapter. It's well to keep in mind here that Paul is not talking about salvation. He is talking about sin and the basis on which God will judge men. These principles of judgment are not the basis of salvation; they are the basis of judgment. I don't know about you, but I wouldn't want to be judged by them. I thank God for a Savior today, and Scripture presents the gospel as the only means of attaining eternal life. To reject the Son of God immediately brings upon a person the judgment of God, and the only verdict here is guilty. "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" ([1John 5:12](#)). And He says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" ([John 5:24](#)). And then listen to the Lord Jesus after that marvelous, wonderful [John 3:16](#) - - we generally stop there -- but He continues: "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" ([John 3:17-18](#)). Also, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" ([John 3:36](#)). So today these folk who do not have Christ are lost. You may be a religious person, you might be a good person, but without Christ, my friend, you're lost.

"Thou art inexcusable, O man" -- "man" is the Greek anthrope, a generic term meaning both men and women. It includes both Jews and Gentiles and refers to mankind in general.

"Whosoever thou art that judgest." He passes now from the general to that which is specific, from the masses to the individual person. And he addresses any person of the human race, but he limits it to those who judge others. Now, the word here for "judge" carries the thought of judging with an adverse verdict. It can be translated, "Whosoever thou art that condemnest another." Therefore this raises the question: What should be the attitude of a believer today toward this awful, horrible group who are mentioned in [Romans 1](#)? It should be this: We should want them to get saved; we should try to get the gospel to them; they are poor, lost creatures. It should be as the hymn writer, Fanny Crosby, expressed it:

Rescue the perishing, Care for the dying, Snatch them in pity from sin
and the grave; Weep o'er the erring ones, Lift up the fallen, Tell them of
Jesus, the mighty to save.

This should be our attitude, while making it clear that they need to be saved and delivered from perversion and immorality.

"For thou that judgest doest the same things" may give a wrong impression. "Same" is the Greek *auta*, and the meaning is not identical things, but things that are as bad in God's sight as the awful, depraved acts of the heathen which are offensive to the cultured and refined sinner.

Let me illustrate this. I heard a man who is not saved say that he didn't believe that hell could be heated hot enough for Hitler. My friend, he is sitting in judgment. He is taking the place of God. And you and I are sitting in judgment on those who are not on our plane. We use society's standards today, and it varies. If someone does not measure up to the standard of your little group, you condemn him. I know some churches where members can get by with lying, with being gossipers, and with being dishonest, but they couldn't get by with smoking a cigarette! They would be condemned for that. My friend, when you judge other people, you are assuming the position of judge. God is saying that by the same token that you have the right to judge other people by your standards, He has the right to judge you by His standards. If we could see ourselves as God sees us, we could see that we are obnoxious; we are repugnant! What contribution can you and I make to heaven? Would we adorn the place? I get the impression from some people that heaven is going to be a better place when they get there -- yet the earth has not been a better place since they have been here! My friend, you try to deny God the same privilege you have of sitting in judgment on others. Well, God is going to judge you, and He won't judge you by your standards, but by His standards. Does that begin to move you? It ought to, because I have found that we don't come up to God's standards.

Now Paul puts down the principles by which God will judge the refined and cultured sinner. Here is the first great principle.

[But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things \[Rom. 2:2\].](#)

In other words, he says, "We know that the judgment of God is according to reality." There are so many folk today, including church members, who live in a world of unreality. They do not want to hear the truth of the gospel. Now, I hear a great many pious folk who say, "Oh, I do want to study the Bible." And then when they get into the Word of God, they find what John found in the Book of Revelation when he began to see the judgments of God. When he first started out, it was thrilling, it was "sweet in his mouth." But when he ate that little book, it gave him indigestion, it was "bitter in his belly" (see [Rev. 10:9-10](#)). And there are a great many Christians today who say they want Bible study, but they don't want reality. They do not want to hear the truth. "We know that the judgment of God is according to reality [the factual condition of man] against them which commit such things."

Now keep in mind that these are principles of judgment, not principles of salvation. Man has an inherent knowledge that he must be judged by a higher power. The coming judgment of God is something every man out of Christ either dreads or denies. The Scripture is very clear on judgment. Paul said to the Athenians, "Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" ([Acts 17:31](#)). And Paul reasoned, you remember, with Felix about

righteousness and self-control and judgment to come. And it frightened this fellow, Felix. In fact, he didn't want to hear another sermon. The judgment of God is in contrast with man's judgment. Man does not have all the facts and his judgment is partial and prejudiced. God's judgment takes in all the facts. God knows the actual state of man -- just what he is. And on that basis He will judge him.

As a boy, I used to pick cotton -- and I wasn't very good at it. I'd bring in a sack of cotton to be weighed, and they only weighed what I brought in. The man weighing the cotton didn't ask me where I picked it or how I picked it or to whom it belonged; he just weighed it. ". . . Thou art weighed in the balances . . ." ([Dan. 5:27](#)), is God's word to every man that boasts of his morality. I think the great delusion of the cultured person is that the depraved person must be judged, but he's confident that he will escape because he's different. Most people believe Hitler and Stalin ought to be judged, but they think they should escape. God will judge man for what he is in His sight. Do you want to stand before God on that basis? I don't.

And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? [[Rom. 2:3](#)].

Robert Govett has called attention to the four ways of escape which are open to the man who breaks human laws:

1. His offence will not be discovered.
2. He may escape beyond the jurisdiction of the court.
3. After arrest, there may be some legal technicality which will cause a breakdown of the legal procedure.
4. After conviction, he may escape from prison and stay under cover.

None of these avenues of escape are open to man in regard to divine judgment. Your offenses will be discovered. You cannot go beyond God's jurisdiction. There will be no legal technicality. You will never be able to escape from prison. The writer of Hebrews asked, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation . . . ?" ([Heb. 2:3](#)).

Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? [[Rom. 2:4](#)].

We ought to recognize today that the goodness of God is something that ought to bring us to our knees before Him. But instead of that, it drives men from God. David was disturbed by the way the wicked could prosper. God didn't seem to do anything to them. In [Psalm 73](#), David says, "For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. . . . They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth. . . . Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end" ([Ps. 73:3-5](#), [9](#), [17](#)). They will face God's judgment, my friend.

And, by the way, if you're a lost man, don't think I am the sort of preacher that tries to take everything away from you. If you haven't trusted Christ and your only hope is in this life, brother, you had better suck this earth like it is an orange and get all you can out of it. Drink all you can, sin all you can, because you won't have anything in the next life. You had better get it while you are here if that's the way you want to live. Eat, drink, and be merry. Tomorrow you die. My friend, you need a Savior. And the goodness of God ought to lead you to Him.

But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God [[Rom. 2:5](#)].

If you are not saved, let me say this to you: you know God has been good to you. God has blessed you. Think of the multitudes of folk on this earth who have nothing, who are literally starving to death. And here you are, a wicked man, living on top of the world. Do you think God is not going to judge you? Do you think that you are going to escape? My friend, the very goodness of God ought to lead you to repentance.

As we come to [verse 6](#), we see the second great principle.

Who will render to every man according to his deeds [[Rom. 2:6](#)].

He shall reward every man according to his works. Absolute justice is the criterion of the judgment or rewards. Man's deeds stand before God in His holy light. No man in his right mind wants to be judged on this basis. Remember Cornelius -- he was a good man, but he was lost.

To them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life [[Rom. 2:7](#)].

Let's keep in mind that under this second principle, a way of life is not the subject. Rather, a way of life is the basis of judgment. The "do-gooder" will be judged according to his works. John said, "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works" ([Rev. 20:12](#)). The man who wants to work for eternal life may do so. He will be judged according to his deeds, but he is warned that they will avail nothing. "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into that lake of fire" ([Rev. 20:15](#)). Trusting Christ as Savior puts your name in the "book of life." Eternal life is not a reward for effort; it is a gift to those who trust Christ.

Now notice the third principle of judgment.

For there is no respect of persons with God [[Rom. 2:11](#)].

This was also a great principle of the Old Testament. "For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward" ([Deut. 10:17](#)). Simon Peter, discovered this when he went into the home of Cornelius. "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons" ([Acts 10:34](#)). God plays no favorites. He has no pets. All men are alike before Him. Justice is blindfolded, not because she is blind, but that she

may not see men in either silk or rags; all must appear alike. Church membership, a good family, being an outstanding citizen, or having a fundamental creed give no advantage before God at all. Do you have a Savior, or don't you? That is the all-important issue.

For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law [[Rom. 2:12](#)].

This is another great principle by which God is going to judge. Notice how it is expressed in the next verse.

(For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified [[Rom. 2:13](#)].

I hear it said that the heathen are lost because they haven't heard of Christ and haven't accepted Him. My friend, they are lost because they are sinners. That's the condition of all mankind. Men are not saved by the light they have; they are judged by the light they have.

"For not the hearers of the law are just before God" -- many folk seem to think that if they just approve the Sermon on the Mount, they are saved.

Now here is the fifth principle.

Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;) [[Rom. 2:15](#)].

God can and will judge the heathen by his own conscience. Some folk think because the heathen do not have the revelation of God that they will escape God's judgment. But the fact is that they are not living up to the light they have. God will judge them on that basis.

In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel [[Rom. 2:16](#)].

We have a false idea today that because we happen to be good folk, that is, we think we are, that we'll be saved. God is going to judge the do-gooders. And He will judge them by Jesus Christ who said that if a man looks upon a woman to lust after her, he is guilty of adultery (see [Matt. 5:27-28](#)). This is only one example of the secrets of the human heart. Do you want the secrets of your heart brought out -- not the lovely things you have said, but the dirty little thoughts that come to you? This should cause all of us to flee to Jesus to save us!

God is going to judge religious people, the Jews in particular, because theirs was a God-given religion.

Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God,

And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law [[Rom. 2:17-18](#)].

Religion was no longer a crutch for this man. It caused him to be proud and self-sufficient. Light created an added responsibility, which brought a greater condemnation. The Jew had ten advantages over the Gentiles, which are listed in these verses. The first five are what he was: (1) bears the name Jew; (2) rests upon the law; (3) boasts in God; (4) knows the will of God; (5) proves the things which are more excellent, being instructed out of the Law.

And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness,

An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law [[Rom. 2:19-20](#)].

The last five personal privileges of the Jew are what he did: (1) Art persuaded that thou thyself art a guide of the blind; (2) a light of them that are in darkness; (3) a corrector of the thoughtless or immature; (4) a teacher of babes or proselytes; and (5) having in the Law the outward form of knowledge and truth.

Now here is Paul's question:

Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?

Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? [[Rom. 2:21-22](#)].

Paul mentions three common sins: (1) immorality -- sin against others; (2) sensuality -- sin against self; and (3) idolatry -- sin against God.

"Teachest thou not thyself?" In other words, "Do you practice what you preach?" For many of us our preaching is better than our living.

"Dost thou commit sacrilege?" -- or "Do you rob temples?" When the Jew was in Babylonian captivity, he took "the gold cure," and, as far as I can tell, he was never given to idolatry after that. However, he didn't mind handling merchandise that came from heathen temples and selling it in his business. Today there are certain Christians who handle merchandise in their business (in order to make money) that they would condemn in their church.

Now the three sins that Paul mentions -- immorality, sensuality, and idolatry -- he had dealt with in inverse order in chapter 1. Idolatry was the terrible climax for the Jew; he could go no lower than that. I wonder if you and I make a mockery of the person of Christ. Someone has put the question in poetic language:

The gospel is written a chapter a day
By deeds that you do and words that you say.
Men read what you say, whether faithless or true,
Say, what is the gospel according to you?

Now he deals with something that is extremely vital.

For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision [[Rom. 2:25](#)].

Circumcision was the badge of the Mosaic system -- and that's all it was. There was no merit in the rite itself. That badge indicated that the man believed the Mosaic Law. Now for them to be transgressors of the Law brought circumcision into disrepute. That which should have been sacred, became profane.

This thought can be applied to our church sacraments. Water baptism is rightly a sacrament of the church, if it is the outward expression of a work of God in the heart. But it is a mockery if the person who is baptized gives no evidence of salvation. This also can be said of church membership. The lives of some church members make membership a mockery.

Listen to Paul as he continues:

Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? [[Rom. 2:26](#)].

To use another figure of speech, if my wife loses her wedding ring, that does not mean she becomes unmarried. Marriage is more than a wedding ring, although the ring may be the symbol of it.

And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfill the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law? [[Rom. 2:27](#)].

Using again the illustration of a wedding ring, to wear a wedding ring speaks of something sacred. But to be unfaithful to that which it stands for makes the wedding ring a disgrace. On one occasion when I was in a motel in another city, I saw a man who was a deacon in a church, sitting at a table, having a very friendly talk with a very beautiful young lady who was not his wife. The thing that impressed me was that as his hand hung over the side of the table, the light was shining on his wedding ring, making it stand out. I thought, what a mockery! When the man saw me, he was embarrassed, of course. But, you see, the wedding ring was meaningless.

The point Paul is making here is that circumcision should stand for something.

But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God [[Rom. 2:29](#)].

The Mosaic Law had already stated that circumcision was of the heart. Listen to Moses in [Deuteronomy 10:16](#): "Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked."

Chapter 3

THEME: Availability of a righteousness from God

What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? [[Rom. 3:1](#)].

"Profit" means that which is surplus, that which is excess, and the question has to do with the outward badge of God's special covenant with the Jews, circumcision.

It looks as if Paul is in danger of erasing a distinction which God has made. The question is, if Jew and Gentile are on the same footing before God, what then is the supposed advantage of the Jew and what good is circumcision?

Let me give you a statement of Dr. James Stifler: "If circumcision in itself does not give righteousness, if uncircumcision does not preclude it, what profit was there ever in it? A distinction that God made among men seems, after all, not to be one." Now, this is the same question, I think, that we hear today. I get it because the gospel that I preach says that church membership has no advantage for salvation, that any rite or ritual you go through is meaningless as far as salvation is concerned. God has the world shut up to a Cross. He's not asking you to join anything or do anything. What God is asking the lost sinner to do is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and he shall be saved. And until a person answers that question, then God hasn't anything else to say to him. After he's saved, then God probably will talk to him about church membership and about baptism. We hear people say today, "Well, doesn't my church, my creed, my membership, my baptism help toward my salvation?" The answer is no, it doesn't help you toward salvation. But if you are saved, then these things are a badge, and these things are a means of communicating to the world who you are. But if you're not measuring up, then your church membership and your baptism are a disgrace; and instead of being sacred they become profane.

Now Paul is going to answer the question: What advantage then did the Jews have?

Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God [[Rom. 3:2](#)].

Paul is saying, "Yes, the Jew has an advantage." The advantage, however, created a responsibility. We need to note carefully the advantage the Jew had because there is a great deal of confusion in this area. I know men who are teaching in theological seminaries who make no distinction between Judaism in the Old Testament and the church in the New Testament. Paul is making it clear that God not only gave to the nation Israel the oracles of God -- they were the ones who communicated the Word of God -- but in the Word of God was something special for them. God is not through with the nation Israel. I always test a theologian at that particular point: Does God have a future for Israel? My friend, if God doesn't have a future for Israel, I don't think He has a future for you either or for that theological professor. All God's promises are in the same Word of God. God is going to make good [John 3:16](#), and God is also going to make good His covenant with Abraham in chapter 12 of Genesis. Listen again to Dr. Stifler as he is speaking of Israel: "His advantage was not that God sowed Judaism and the world reaped Christianity. That blots out Judaism. It was first of all 'that unto them were committed to the oracles of God,' not that they were made a mere Bible depository, but that God gave them, as Jews, promises, not yet fulfilled, and peculiarly their own. The Old Testament, the record of its oracles, contains not one promise either of or to the church as an

organization. It does not predict a church; it foreshadows a kingdom in which the Jew shall be head and not lose his national distinction as he does in the church." Now, friend, I think that's one of the most important and profound statements that has been made concerning the Word of God. At this point "great" theologians differ. Dr. Adolph Saphir was a converted Jew, and he made this tremendous, pointed statement: "The view that is so prevalent, that Israel is a shadow of the church, and now that the type is fulfilled vanishes from our horizon, is altogether unscriptural. Israel is not the shadow fulfilled and absorbed in the church, but the basis on which the church rests." Friend, that is an important comment, and that's what Paul is saying here -- that the Jew has a great advantage. God has a future for him, and his faithlessness will not destroy God's promise. Listen to Paul:

For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? [[Rom. 3:3](#)].

"If some were without faith" is a better translation. Shall their lack of faith cancel out the faithfulness of God? This is another objection that would be put up, and Paul meets this by going back to the first. Now if the advantage of the Jew did not serve the intended purpose, does this not mean God's faithfulness to His people is annulled? The Jew failed; doesn't that mean God failed? No. God's promise to send Israel the Redeemer was not defeated by their willful disobedience and rejection. All His promises for the future of the nation will be fulfilled to His glory in spite of their unbelief. Now, my friend, you may not like that, but I personally thank God that His promises to me do not depend on my faithfulness. If it had depended on me, I would have been lost long ago. Thank God for His faithfulness!

God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged [[Rom. 3:4](#)].

In other words, the unbeliever that raises this question is a liar and God is going to make him out to be a liar someday. Why? Because the faithfulness of God is true and cannot be changed. How important that is! John says, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son" ([1John 5:10](#)). How bad is it not to believe that God gave His Son to die for you? Well, I'll tell you how bad it is: You make God a liar. That's what you do when you reject His Son.

But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man) [[Rom. 3:5](#)].

By some subtle sophistry it might be argued that since the nation's unbelief merely puts in contrast the faithfulness of God, God is not just to punish that which brings greater glory to Himself. A better translation would be: "Is God unjust who visiteth with wrath by judging" these people? Now this is the severest criticism that Paul faced in preaching the gospel of the grace of God. If God uses sin to get glory to Himself, then He should not punish the sinner. This, of course, was used by some as an excuse for sinning. We'll find this again in [Romans 6:1](#) and will deal with it then. Paul asks the question in such a way in the Greek as to demand a negative answer. God is not unjust. He says, "I speak as a

man." That doesn't mean that Paul is not writing this particular passage by inspiration, but rather that he is presenting this question from the finite and human standpoint.

Now, the whole point is this: if my unrighteousness reveals the marvelous, wonderfully infinite faithfulness of God in the grace of God, then has God a right to judge me? That's what Paul is asking here. This makes it very clear that the unsaved world in Paul's day understood that Paul was preaching salvation by the grace of God. How wonderful!

God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world? [[Rom. 3:6](#)].

If God would have no right to judge us because our sin merely reveals the grace of God, then God would have no right to judge any person, you see, because they would reveal something of the common grace of God.

Paul's answer is again an emphatic and categorical denial of any such premise that God is unjust. The argument here is that if this particular sin merely enhances the glory of God and the grace of God, then all sin would do the same. Therefore, God would not be able to judge the world. He would abdicate His throne as Judge of all the earth. This specious argument would say that Hitler ought not to be judged. And whoever you are -- even if you are an unbeliever -- you do believe that some people ought to be judged. Now, you may not think that you ought to be, but you believe somebody ought to be judged. Everyone believes that. We have that innate sense within us today, and God has put it there.

For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner? [[Rom. 3:7](#)].

The lie here means moral falsehood. Each individual could claim exemption from the judgment of God because his sin had advanced the glory of God.

And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just [[Rom. 3:8](#)].

In this verse Paul drives his argument to its logical, yet untenable conclusion. This is called an argumentum ad absurdum. If sin magnifies the glory of God, then the more sin the more glory. Some had falsely accused Paul of teaching this absurdity. It was ridiculous, for it was Paul who insisted that God must judge sin. As surely as there is sin there must be judgment. You see, this facetious type of argument which Paul has met here makes a Robespierre a saint in the name of utilitarianism. It's the old bromide that the end justifies the means.

Now we come to this section where we have the accusation of "guilty" by God against mankind. Paul is going to conclude this section on sin by bringing mankind up before the Judge of all the earth. And the accusation of "guilty" is made by God against all mankind -- both Jew and Gentile, black and white, male and female, rich and poor. It doesn't make any difference who we are; if we belong to the human race, you and I stand guilty before God. And then Paul is going to take us to God's clinic. It's a real spiritual clinic, and the Great Physician is going to look at us. We see that there are fourteen different charges made; six of them before the Judge and the other eight before the Great Physician who

says we're sick. In fact, we're sick nigh unto death. To tell the truth, we are dead in trespasses and sin. That is our condition.

What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin [[Rom. 3:9](#)].

Now Paul doesn't mean "proved" here. That word is a little too strong; it does not have quite that shade of meaning, because Paul is not trying to prove man a sinner. Rather, he is showing that God judges sin. He assumes man is a sinner, and you don't have to assume it -- it is evident. He is merely stating that which is very obvious today. The better word is charged -- "for we have before charged both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin." He is just stating the case, by the way, that it doesn't make any difference who we are today -- high or low, rich or poor, good or bad -- we're all under sin.

Now it's very important to understand what it means to be "under sin." Man is a sinner four different ways. God is giving man four strikes (in baseball you get only three). (1) Man is a sinner by act. (2) Man is a sinner by nature. Sinning does not make a sinner; we sin because we are sinners. (3) Man is a sinner by imputation. We'll see that later in this epistle. (4) The estate of man is under sin. We all are under sin -- the entire human family.

This is the first charge:

As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one [[Rom. 3:10](#)].

This should read, "It is written that there is none righteous, no, not one," because it is a free rendering of [Psalm 14:1](#).

He makes the positive statement that "none . . . doeth good." "Doeth good" and righteousness are the same. What does it mean to be righteous? Well, it means to be right. Right with whom? We are to be right with God. And if we are going to be right with God, it is a little different from being right with your fellow man. When we have differences with friends, we may or may not be to blame, but we have to reach some sort of compromise. But if we are going to be right with God, we are going to play according to His rules. Actually, you can't play games with Him. You see, God's salvation is a take it or leave it proposition. God is not forcing anybody to take His salvation. You don't have to be saved. You can turn it down. God says, "This is My universe. You're living on My little world, using My sunshine and My water and My air, and I have worked out a plan of salvation that is true to My character and My nature. My plan and My program is the one that's going to be carried out. You're a sinner, and I want to save you because I love you. Now here it is. Take it or leave it." That's what God is saying to a lost world. This is what He is saying to you. Have you accepted it? Well, I want you to know that I have accepted it. To be right with God, then, means to accept His salvation.

When I was in school, I had a professor of sociology who really enjoyed batting that little ball around, saying, "Who is right? Who is going to make the rules?" Well, I know one thing: that professor is not going to make the rules. I know something else: I am not going to make the rules, and you are not going to make the rules either. God makes the rules. Take it or leave it. That is God's plan; that is God's program. There is none who is

righteous, none right with God. But He has worked out a plan. No one has done good according to God's standard, according to God's method. That is the Judge's first charge.

The second charge is this:

There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God [[Rom. 3:11](#)].

In other words, there is none who acts on the knowledge that he has. No one is the person he would like to be.

The third charge:

"There is none that seeketh after God." God is not concealed today. God is not playing hide-and-seek with man. He has revealed Himself. You remember that Paul told the Athenians, the philosophers on Mars Hill: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent" ([Acts 17:30](#)). He is not winking at sin today. God is out in the open telling man that he is a sinner and offering him salvation. And His salvation is clear, you see. That's what He is saying here. And there is none that seeks after God. The anthologies of religion say man is out looking for God -- how fallacious they are! It's claimed that in the evolutionary process religion is man's search for God. Well, actually, is religion man's search for God? No. That's not what the Bible teaches. Believe me, man hasn't found out very much about God on his own. He hasn't advanced very far in that direction, because he's going the wrong way. He's going away from God.

Then the fourth charge that He makes is:

They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one [[Rom. 3:12](#)].

They've detoured. They left the way they knew was right. And primitive tribes have an ancient tradition that way back at one time their forefathers knew the living and true God. My friend, if you are honest, you know that you are not doing what you ought to do. Furthermore, you are not going to do it, although you know what it is. You have gone out of the way. Man has deviated from the way. This is the fourth charge that God makes.

The fifth charge is: "they are together become unprofitable." The word unprofitable suggests overripe, spoiled fruit. It could be translated, "they have altogether become sour." I am very fond of fruit, especially the papaya. But when it passes the ripe state and becomes rotten, there is nothing quite as bad as that. Mankind is not lush fruit; he is corrupt fruit. That is what the Judge of all the earth is saying.

The sixth charge: "there is none that doeth good, no, not one." This is a triple negative. Mankind is like a group of travelers who have gone in the opposite direction from the right one, and not one can help the others. Our Lord said to the religious leaders of His day, "You are blind leaders of the blind" (see [Matt. 15:14](#)). That is what the Judge of all the earth says about you and about me and about everyone on the face of the earth.

Now Paul transfers us over to God's clinic into the hands of the Great Physician. This is a spiritual clinic, and the Great Physician says that we are spiritually sick.

[Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips \[Rom. 3:13\].](#)

When you go to the doctor, what's the first thing that he says to you? Well, I have to go in for a regular check-up because of the fact that I apparently have cancer in my system, and I report regularly in case of an outbreak. Well, it is a ritual for me to go in, and I sit down in the little room where he does his examination. Do you know the first thing that he says to me? "Open your mouth." Then he takes a little wooden stick and pushes it around in my mouth, and he looks at my throat. Likewise God, the Lord Jesus, the Great Physician, does that with mankind. Do you know what He says? "Their throat is an open sepulchre." Have you ever smelled decaying human flesh? When a little girl in Nashville was kidnapped many years ago, the sheriff of the county was a member and a deacon in my church. He called me up and told me they had found the body of a little girl, and they were going out to exhume it. He wanted to know if I wanted to go with them. I got to the place where they had taken the body out -- it had been buried several days -- and the body was corrupt. Oh, it was terrible! I've never been as sick in my life as I was at the odor of corrupt human flesh. I always think of that in connection with this verse.

When God looks down at you, friend, He doesn't say what a sweet, fine little boy or girl you are. God says you smell like an open grave! Someone, I think it was Mel Trotter, said, "If we could see ourselves as God sees us, we couldn't even stand ourselves!" Well, that is what Paul is saying here.

And "with their tongues they have used deceit." That's number two. And the second thing my doctor says to me (after he looks at my throat) is, "Stick out your tongue!" That's what the Great Physician says to the human family. "Stick out your tongue." And when God looks at the tongue of mankind -- that means your tongue and mine -- do you know what He says? "The poison of asps is under their lips." There's a snake house and a place for reptiles in the zoo in San Diego, California, which I have been through several times. As I look at the vicious fangs of those diamondback rattlers, I think of the poison that is there. Friend, right now, if you go and look in the mirror, you will see a tongue that is far more dangerous than any diamondback rattlesnake. He can't hurt your reputation at all. He can kill your body, but he can't hurt your reputation. You have a tongue that you can use to ruin the reputation of someone else. You can ruin the fair name of some woman. You can ruin the reputation of some man. I think today the most vicious thing in some of our churches is the gossip that is carried on. I actually advised someone not too long ago not to join a certain church, because I happen to know that some of the worst gossips in the world are in that church. And I want to tell you they have slaughtered the reputation of many individuals. Do you know who they are? They are the so-called spiritual crowd. I call them the spiritual snobs, because that's what they are. With their tongues they use deceit, and "the poison of asps [adder's poison] is under their lips." Oh, how vicious the human tongue is! How terrible it can be.

[Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness \[Rom. 3:14\].](#)

This is the fourth thing the Great Physician says about man. His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud; under his tongue is mischief and vanity. Also he is prone to curse. And if you listen to what is being said today, you know that cursing is in the vocabulary of all men, whether he is a ditch digger or a college professor. They're better at using profanity than they are at any other language. A man challenged this verse one time when I was a pastor in downtown Los Angeles. He didn't believe it was true. So I said to him, "Let's test it. You and I will walk out here to the corner, and the first man who comes by, whoever he is, you punch him in the mouth and see what comes out. I guarantee that it will be as God says."

Then God says the fifth thing.

Their feet are swift to shed blood [[Rom. 3:15](#)].

[Isaiah 59:7](#) gives the unabridged version: "Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths." What a picture this is of mankind -- "Their feet are swift to shed blood."

Destruction and misery are in their ways [[Rom. 3:16](#)].

Man leaves desolation and distress behind him. This is included in [Isaiah 59:7](#) which we have quoted.

And the way of peace have they not known [[Rom. 3:17](#)].

Man does not know the way of peace. Look about you in the world today. After all these years man is still talking about peace, but he hasn't found it. Just read your newspaper, my friend; there is no peace in this world.

There is no fear of God before their eyes [[Rom. 3:18](#)].

Paul seems to sum up all of man's sin in this final statement. He has no fear of God at all. Man is living as if God does not exist. Man actually defies God. What a picture this gives of mankind!

Now we come to the final thing Paul has to say about sin. Because there are still those who will say, "Well, we have the Law and we'll keep the Law. We will hold onto it."

Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God [[Rom. 3:19](#)].

Man cannot attain righteousness by the Mosaic Law. It is as if mankind in desperation grabbed for the Law as the proverbial straw when drowning. The Law won't lift him up. Actually, it does the opposite. To hold onto the Law is like a man jumping out of an airplane, and instead of taking a parachute, he takes a sack of cement with him. Well, believe me, the Law will pull you down. It condemns man. It's a ministration of death.

Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin [[Rom. 3:20](#)].

Now, I challenge any person today who believes that you have to keep the Law to be saved to take this verse and explain it. "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no

flesh be justified in his sight." And "justified" means to be declared righteous, to be saved, to meet God's standards. You can never do it, my beloved. It's absolutely impossible for mankind to do. "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified." Then what is the purpose of the Law? "By the law is the knowledge of sin." Rather than providing a salvation for man, the Law reveals man to be a sinner.

Between [verses 20](#) and 21 there is a "Grand Canyon" division. We move out of the night into the day. Now Paul begins to speak of God's wonderful salvation. He will talk about justification by faith, which will be explained in the remainder of the chapter.

Availability Of A Righteousness From God (3:21-31)

But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested,
being witnessed by the law and the prophets [[Rom. 3:21](#)].

"The righteousness of God" should be a righteousness of God, since the article is absent in the Greek. This "righteousness" is not an attribute of God -- He says that He will not share His glory with another -- nor is it the righteousness of man. God has already said that ". . . our righteousness are as filthy rags . . ." ([Isa. 64:6](#)), and God is not taking in dirty laundry. Then what righteousness is Paul speaking of? It is the righteousness which God provides. Christ has become our righteousness. "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" ([1Cor. 1:30](#)). Also we are told in [2Corinthians 5:21](#): "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." It is very important for us to recognize tht God is the One who provides this righteousness. It's not something that you and I can work out, but rather it is something that God has provided for us. A righteousness that God demands, God also provides.

This is a righteousness that is apart from the Law, that is, you can't get it, my friend, by doing something or keeping something -- not even God's Law. You can't keep the Law to begin with. God can't save you by law for the very simple reason that you can't measure up to it. God can't accept imperfection, and you and I cannot provide perfection. Therefore, He cannot save us by law. "Being witnessed by the law and the prophets" means that the Law bore witness to it in that at the very center of the Mosaic system was a tabernacle where bloody sacrifices were offered which pointed to Christ. Also the prophets witnessed to it when they spoke of the coming of Christ, His death and resurrection. For example, Isaiah prophesied, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. . . . Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand" ([Isa. 53:6](#), [10](#)).

Both the Law and the prophets witnessed to this righteousness that God would provide in Christ.

Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ
unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference
[[Rom. 3:22](#)].

When I was a young preacher I thought that the grace of God had to go way down to reach the bad sinners but didn't have to go down so far to reach others who weren't so bad. But now I know that God's grace has to go all the way to the bottom to get all of us. Each one of us is completely lost outside of Christ. Either you are absolutely saved in Christ, or you are completely lost outside of Christ. All of us need the righteousness of Christ. There is no difference.

The righteousness of Christ comes to us through our faith in Christ. Great men of the past have given some apt definitions of this righteousness. William Cunningham wrote: "Under law God required righteousness from man. Under grace, He gives righteousness to man. The righteousness of God is that righteousness which God's righteousness requires Him to require." That is a deep definition, but it is a good one. The great Dr. Charles Hodge has given this definition: "That righteousness of which God is the author which is of avail before Him, which meets and secures His approval." Then Dr. Brooks gives this definition: "That righteousness which the Father required, the Son became, and the Holy Spirit convinces of, and faith secures." Dr. Moorehead writes: "The sum total of all that God commands, demands, approves, and Himself provides." I don't believe it can be said any better than the way these men have said it.

Now this righteousness, as we have seen it, is secured by faith, not by works. Let's look at these verses together.

Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ
unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God [[Rom. 3:22-23](#)].

Let me give you a free rendering of these verses: Even the righteousness from God which is obtained by faith in Jesus Christ unto all and upon all that believe: for there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory [approval] of God. That this righteousness is by faith, not by works, the Lord Jesus made clear when they asked him, "... What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" Jesus answered and said unto them, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent" ([John 6:28-29](#)). And the important thing about securing this righteousness of God is not that there's any merit in your faith or that there's merit in just believing. Because, actually, faith is not a work on your part. The object of faith is the important thing. Spurgeon put it like this: "It's not thy hope in Christ which saves you. It's Christ. It's not thy joy in Christ that saves you. It is Christ. And it is not thy faith in Christ that saves you, though that be the instrument, it is Christ's blood and merit." Now, friend, that's very important to nail in our thinking.

And that righteousness is like a garment. It is available to all, but it only comes upon all that believe. And then he says that it's needed by everyone: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Now that doesn't mean that there is not a difference in sinners. Let me illustrate this with a very homely illustration. Let's suppose that we folk here in California play a game called "Jumping to Catalina." Catalina Island is out in the Pacific Ocean at least fifteen or twenty miles from the shore of California. We will go down to the pier in Santa Monica, and we will take a big running jump, and we'll see who

can jump to Catalina. Somebody's going to say, "That's an impossible jump!" Frankly, no one has jumped it, but it's a lot of fun playing the game. Suppose you and I play the game. You may be able to jump farther than I can jump, but you will miss Catalina. And the fellow who jumps the farthest gets the wettest and has to swim farther back to shore. Of course, nobody could jump to Catalina. Some are better than others, but it's rather childish to play a game like that and say, "I jumped farther than you did. I'm better than you are, and I'm better than half the church members." Suppose you are -- and you may well be -- but what difference does that make? You have not come up to the glory of God.

Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus [[Rom. 3:24](#)].

"Freely" is the Greek word *dorean*, translated in [John 15:25](#) "without a cause." Our Lord Jesus said that they hated Him freely, without a cause -- there was no basis for it. Now Paul is saying, "Being justified freely -- without a cause." There is no explanation in us. God doesn't say, "Oh, they are such wonderful people, I'll have to do something for them!" As we have seen before, there is nothing in us that would call out the grace of God, other than our great need. We are justified without a cause. It is by His grace, which means that there is no merit on our part. Grace is unmerited favor; it is love in action.

It is "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Redemption is always connected with the grace of God. The reason that God can save you and me is that Christ redeemed us; He paid a price. He died upon a cross to make it available to us. You see, justification by faith is actually more than subtraction of our sins -- that is, forgiveness. It is the addition of the righteousness of Christ. In other words, we are not merely restored to Adam's former position, but now we are placed in Christ where we shall be throughout the endless ages of eternity the sons of God!

John Bunyan was driven almost to distraction because he realized that he was such a great sinner with no righteousness of his own. And he said at that time, "When God showed me John Bunyan as God saw John Bunyan, I no longer confessed I was a sinner, but I confessed that I was sin from the crown of my head to the sole of my feet. I was full of sin." And Bunyan struggled with the problem of how he could stand in God's presence even with his sins forgiven. Where could he gain a standing before God? And so, walking through the cornfields one night, as he wrestled with this problem, the words of Paul (who was another great sinner, who called himself the chief of sinners) came to him, and his burden rolled off his shoulders. The word from Paul was [Philippians 3:9](#): "And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." And when you read Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, you're reading actually the story of Bunyan's life. And you remember, when Pilgrim came with that great burden on his shoulders through the Slough of Despond, he didn't know what to do until finally he came to the Cross, and there the burden rolled off, and he trusted Christ as his Savior.

"By his grace" is the way God saves us. This is the fountain from which flow down the living waters of God in this age of grace. And so, because of what God has done -- sending His Son to die -- God is able to save by grace. And Paul in [Ephesians 2:4-5](#) says, "But God, who is rich in mercy [that means He has plenty of it], for his great love

wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)." And Dr. Newell said of that grace, "The grace of God is infinite love operating by an infinite means -- the sacrifice of Christ; and an infinite freedom, unhindered, now, by the temporary restrictions of the law." Today a holy God is free to reach down to meet your needs. How wonderful it is to know a holy God is free to save those who will trust Christ. Dr. Newell again said, "Everything connected with God's salvation is glad in bestowment, infinite in extent, and unchangeable in its character." And it's all available, and only available, in Christ Jesus. He alone could pay the price. As Peter put it to the nation Israel, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" ([Acts 4:12](#)).

Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus [[Rom. 3:25-26](#)].

Notice it is "faith in his blood." That blood speaks of His life -- ". . . without shedding of blood is no remission" ([Heb. 9:22](#)). And I tell you, when you put a knife in the body of a man and the blood pours out, that man is a dead man because "the life of the flesh is in the blood." And the life of Jesus Christ was given. That blood is a very precious thing according to Simon Peter.

Now, these two verses are filled with words that are jawbreakers: propitiation, righteousness, remission. Although they are difficult words, don't be too frightened of them, because when we boil them down to our size, we find that in these two verses we have what Calvin called the very marrow of theology. Calvin also wrote: "There is not probably in the whole Bible a passage which sets forth more profoundly the righteousness of God in Christ."

"God hath set forth" -- God is the sole architect of salvation, and He is the One today who is able to save. You and I cannot save; no religion can save; no church can save. Paul said to the Corinthians, "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ . . ." ([2Cor. 5:18](#)). He did it. Now, He is giving to us the ministry of reconciliation, and so all that the holy God is asking you and me to do today is to be reconciled to Him. You don't have to do anything to soften God's heart. I have a friend who was an evangelist for years, and he always liked to get people to cry. I used to ask him how many tears you'd have to shed to soften God's heart. "Oh," he said, "don't be ridiculous." I told him, "I'm not being ridiculous. You are. You say you've got to come down to the altar and shed some tears." My friend, God's heart is already soft. All you have to do is come. He is reconciled to you. He says to you, "Be ye reconciled to God." Christ has been "set forth"; that is, He has been exhibited or displayed.

"To be a propitiation" points back to the time over nineteen hundred years ago when Christ was set forth as the Savior. You will recall that the veil of the temple hid the mercy seat and only the high priest could go in past that veil. But today Christ has been set

before us as the mercy seat. Speaking of the mercy seat, the writer of Hebrews says, "And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat . . ." ([Heb. 9:5](#)) -- the Greek word for mercy seat, hilasterion, is the same word translated "propitiation." Christ has been set forth as the mercy seat. You recall that the poor publican cried out, because he needed a mercy seat, ". . . God be merciful to me a sinner" ([Luke 18:13](#)), which literally is, "God, if there were only a mercy seat for me, a poor publican, to come to!" You see, when a Jew became a publican, he cut himself off from the temple and from the mercy seat that was there. Paul is saying that now there is on display a mercy seat -- God hath set forth Christ to be a propitiation through faith in His blood. It is wonderful to know that we have a holy God who in joy and in satisfaction and delight can hold out to the world today a mercy seat.

And God doesn't reluctantly save you. If you come, He saves you wholeheartedly, abundantly. Some folk tell me that after I am saved I still have to search and pray and tarry for something more. My friend, when I came to Jesus, I got everything (see [Eph. 1:3](#)). Oh, how good He was! He didn't hold back anything. And He says to come, He can accept you. ". . . him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" ([John 6:37](#)). Actually, you and I were shut out from a holy God. But the way now has been opened up for us by His blood.

"To declare his righteousness for the remission of sins are past." That doesn't mean your sins and my sins of the past; it means the sins of those who lived before the Cross. You see, back in the Old Testament, they brought a little lamb. And I'm sure you don't take a little lamb to church to sacrifice. Today it would be sinful to do that. But back then, before Christ came, it was required; the Law required it. Now, that little lamb pointed to the coming of Christ. No one back in those days believed that the little lamb could take away sins. I don't think any of them did. Suppose you had been there when Abel brought a little lamb to God, "Abel, do you think this little lamb is going to take away your sin?" He would have told you no. And you would have said, "Then why did you bring it?" His answer would have been, "God required it. God commanded us to bring it." [Hebrews 11:4](#) tells us "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. . . ." In other words, he did it by revelation, because "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" ([Rom. 10:17](#)). The only way Abel could have brought that sacrifice by faith was for God to have told him to bring it. And that is what God did.

You might have said to Abel, "Specifically what do you think God has in mind?" And I think he would have said this, "Well, God has told my mother that there's coming a Savior. We don't know when, but until He comes, we're to do this because we're to come by faith." And so the "sins that are past" means that up to the time when Christ died, God saved on credit. God did not save Abraham because he brought a sacrifice. God never saved any of them because they brought a sacrifice. A sacrifice pointed to Christ. When Christ came, He paid for all the sins of the past and also for the sins this side of the Cross.

"To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." On this side of the Cross we don't bring a sacrifice, but we are to trust in Christ and His blood.

Now Paul raises a question:

Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works?
Nay: but by the law of faith [[Rom. 3:27](#)].

If God is saving by faith in Christ and not by your merit, your works, then where is boasting? What is it that you and I have to crow about? We can't even boast of the fact that we're fundamental in doctrine. We have nothing to glory in today. Paul asks, "Where is boasting then?" And he answers the question he raises.

"It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith." The word law in the first instance is not restricted to the Old Testament Law but means the principle of law -- any law, anything that you think you can do. The second reference to law excludes the Old Testament Law and means simply a rule or principle of faith. In other words, God has the human race not on the merit system, but on the basis of simply believing what He has done for us. Therefore, it excludes boasting.

Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law [[Rom. 3:28](#)].

This is not a conclusion that Paul is coming to or even a summing up of what he has said. Rather, he is giving an explanation of why boasting is excluded. Why is boasting excluded? Man is justified by faith.

Now Paul not only drives the nail in, he turns the board over and clinches it. Listen to him:

Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also [[Rom. 3:29](#)].

In other words, does God belong to the Jews alone and not also to the Gentiles? And Paul says, "Yes, to the Gentiles also." Now, listen to this. This is a very cogent argument. Paul says, "If justification is by the law, then God does belong to the Jews. But if justification is by faith, then He is the God of both Jews and Gentiles." Now, notice the logic of this. If the Jew persisted in this position, then there must be two Gods -- one for the Jews, one for the Gentiles. But the Jew would not allow this. He was a monotheist, that is, he believed in one God. Probably the greatest statement that ever was given to the nation Israel was [Deuteronomy 6:4](#), "Hear, O Israel: Jehovah, our Elohim is one Jehovah" (literal translation mine). That was the clarion message He gave in the pagan world before Christ came.

Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith [[Rom. 3:30](#)].

In other words, there's only one God. And in the Old Testament, He gave man the Law. Man failed. God didn't save them by their keeping the Law; salvation was always by the sacrifice which man brought in faith, pointing to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law [[Rom. 3:31](#)].

The reference to the Law, I think, brings in another meaning of this word. It is not restricted to the Mosaic system here. Neither does it refer to just any law. Rather, it refers to the entire Old Testament revelation. "Faith" excluded the works of the Law. But did it

abrogate the entire Old Testament revelation? Of course not! Paul will demonstrate in the next chapter by Old Testament illustrations of two men, Abraham and David, that it did not exclude that. These two key men, outstanding men, were saved, not by law but by faith. To begin with, Abraham was born and lived and died four hundred years before the Law was ever given. Abraham did not live on the basis of the Mosaic Law since it was not yet given in his day. God saved him on a different basis, which is by faith. And somebody says, "Well, then what about David?" Now, very honestly, do you think David could have been saved by keeping the Law? Of course he couldn't. The Old Testament made it very clear that David broke the Law. And yet God saved him. How? Well, He saved him by faith. David trusted God and believed God. Even in his sin, he came in confession to God. God accepted him and saved him by faith.

Today, my friend, when you and I will take the position that we're sinners and come to God and trust Christ as our Savior -- regardless of who we are, where we are, how we are or when we are -- God will save us. For God today has put man on one basis and one basis alone. His question is, What will you do with My Son who died for you on the Cross?

Chapter 4

THEME: Abraham; David; Abraham justified by faith

In this great section of justification by faith, we have seen the doctrine. Paul has vividly stated that man is a sinner. Then he revealed that God provides a righteousness for sinners, and justification by faith has been explained. Now he will illustrate this truth with two men out of the Old Testament: Abraham and David.

In Paul's day Abraham and David were probably held in higher esteem by the nation Israel than any other two whose lives are recorded in the Old Testament. Abraham was the founder of the Hebrew race, and David was their greatest king. Paul uses these two Old Testament worthies as illustrations to establish his statement in chapter 3 that there is concord and agreement between the Law and the gospel. Although they represent two diametrically opposed systems, neither contradicts nor conflicts with the other. And they are not mutually exclusive. Even under the Law and before the Law, faith was God's sole requirement. Abraham, before the Law, was justified by faith. And David, under the Law, sang of justification by faith. Paul is not presenting some strange new doctrine which cancels out the Old Testament and leaves the Jew afloat on the sea of life holding onto an anchor rather than being in a lifeboat. Paul is showing that Abraham and David are in the same lifeboat, which he is offering his own people in his day, labeled "justification by faith." The Law was a pedagogue -- it took the man under Law by the hand to lead him to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Abraham (4:1-5)

Now we see in the first five verses that Abraham was justified by faith.

What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? [[Rom. 4:1](#)].

Let's rearrange the modifiers and phrases to help us follow the thought of Paul: Therefore, what shall we say that Abraham, our first father, has found according to the flesh, that is, by natural human effort? The therefore that opens this chapter connects this argument with what Paul has been talking about back in the third chapter. The gospel excludes boasting and establishes the Law, as we have seen. Abraham and David confirm Paul in this thesis.

Paul uses the idiomatic phrase "What shall we say?" here and in the other argumentative portions of this epistle. In the first division, Paul did not attempt to prove or argue that man is a sinner. For this reason we did not find this phrase there. Also in the last section of this epistle, which is practical, it is entirely omitted.

"Abraham, our first father" reveals that the nation Israel began with Abraham. "First father," I think, is a peculiar expression. It reveals the importance attached to Abraham, who was first chronologically and also first in importance. Many years ago when I was a pastor in Nashville, several friends that I had known before I studied for the ministry -- they were Jewish friends -- invited me to come up one evening to speak to a group in the Young Men's Hebrew Association. So I spoke to them on the glories of the Mosaic Law. I was amazed to find that they reckoned their ancestry from Abraham -- they never went past Abraham. Quite a few of their questions revealed that, and finally I asked them some questions. I asked, "Don't you count Noah or Adam in the line?" These young Jewish friends laughed and said, "No, we stop with Abraham. He's our first father."

"Pertaining to the flesh" could modify Abraham, or it could modify the verb has found. What has he found according to the flesh? Abraham has found that Abraham's works according to the flesh did not produce boasting but produced shame and confusion. That was Abraham's works. He had nothing to boast of. Oh, don't misunderstand; I think Abraham was a great man, and especially in that matter of Lot. He wouldn't let the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah reward him. But in another section Abraham didn't believe God, and he ran down to Egypt. This matter of that little Egyptian maid that he got and the son that came from her, these are things that are not to be boasted of by Abraham.

Now notice how Paul develops this.

For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory;
but not before God [[Rom. 4:2](#)].

If Abraham were justified (declared to be righteous) by works -- that is, the works of the flesh "he hath whereof to glory," but not before God. He can glory in self, but he cannot glory before God. It was assumed that Abraham had good works that counted before God. And the fact of the matter is that Abraham had many good works. But the startling thing was to discover that these good works were not the ground of salvation but were the result of his salvation and the result of being justified by faith. You see, James and Paul did not contradict each other when James said, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? ([James 2:21](#)). The works that James described are not the works of the flesh under the Law, because Abraham wasn't under the Law. They were works of faith. Abraham believed God, and he offered up Isaac. But did he actually do it? No, God stopped him and would not let him go through with it. Why? Because it was wrong. You see, Paul and James quote the same verse:

Abraham believed God, and He counted it unto him for righteousness (cf. [Gen. 15:6](#); [James 2:23](#); [Rom. 4:3](#)). But James goes to the end of Abraham's life, to the time that he offered up Isaac. Abraham stood on the same ground on which the weakest sinner stands. Granted that he did have works in which to boast, but he could never boast before God, because God does not accept the works of the flesh. The works of the flesh cannot stand before His holiness, and certainly Abraham's works were tainted.

For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness [[Rom. 4:3](#)].

Paul appeals to the Scripture as final authority. He even personifies it here -- the Scripture is God speaking. What does the Scripture say? There is no other authority to which he can appeal. It was Dr. Benjamin Warfield who made this statement: "The Bible is the Word of God in such a way that whatever the Bible says God says."

How I wish that more men who claim to be evangelical really believed the Word of God - that it is the Word of God, that it is God speaking. Paul quotes from the Old Testament directly about sixty times in this epistle. This quotation is, of course, from [Genesis 15:6](#): "And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness." Paul is saying, "Hear what the Scripture says; God is speaking to you in His Word." How tremendous this is.

This promise was given to Abraham at a time when he raised a question with God: ". . . what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless . . . ?" ([Gen. 15:2](#)). God gave him no assurance other than a confirmation of the promise that his seed would be like the stars. In other words, Abraham simply believed God. He took the naked Word of God at face value, and he rested in it. Newell puts it like this: "There was no honor, no merit, in Abraham believing the faithful God, who cannot lie. The honor was God's. When Abraham believed God, he did the one thing that a man can do without doing anything! God made the statement, the promise, and God undertook to fulfill it. Abraham believed in his heart that God told the truth. There was no effort here. Abraham's faith was not an act, but an attitude. His heart was turned completely away from himself to God and His promise. This left God free to fulfill that promise. Faith was neither a meritorious act by Abraham, nor a change of character or nature in Abraham; he simply believed God would accomplish what He had promised: 'In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed' ([Gen. 12:3](#))." How wonderful!

"Counted unto him for righteousness." God counted, reckoned, it to him. God put it to Abraham's account. He imputed it over to him for righteousness. It was not righteousness, but that is how God reckoned it.

Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.

But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness [[Rom. 4:4-5](#)].

It is a general rule that a workman is paid wages for the services that he renders. A man works for so much an hour, or he is paid so much for a particular job. Obviously Abraham was not a workman, for he did not earn what he received. His salvation was

received on the only other basis, and that was undeserved favor -- by the grace of God -- and he believed God. "But to him that worketh not" that is, there is nothing that you can do that will merit salvation. But you believe on Him, that is, on God, who declares the ungodly righteous. And the only kind of people God is saving are unrighteous people. Somebody says, "You mean that He doesn't save good people?" Well, do you want to name one? God will save any man who is good. But Scripture, as we've already seen, says, "There is none righteous, no, not one" ([Rom. 3:10](#)). This is according to God's standard, not according to my little standard or your standard. If you want to name somebody who is good, you will make God out a liar. Are you prepared to do that? And, of course, you would have to prove your point.

"His faith is counted for righteousness." Faith is the only condition. God accepts faith in lieu of works. There is no merit in faith, but it is the only way of receiving that which God freely offers. Faith honors God and secures righteousness for man. God put down righteousness in Abraham's account to his credit. His faith counted for what it was not -- a righteousness from God. This is important to see.

David (4:6-8)

Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works [[Rom. 4:6](#)].

David lived under the Law -- Abraham did not because no law had been given during his lifetime. The Mosaic system didn't come along until four hundred years later. However, although David lived under the Law, David could never be saved under the Law. And therefore David described the blessedness that God reckons righteousness without works -- because David had no works. The works that he had were evil. And therefore, righteousness must be totally apart and separate from works. Righteousness must come on an entirely different principle.

Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered [[Rom. 4:7](#)].

This is a direct quotation from [Psalm 32](#), [verses 1](#) and 2. And this is one of the great penitential psalms of David -- [Psalm 51](#) is the other one. These verses are the outcome of David's great sin and his confession and acceptance which followed.

"Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven." Are you one of the blessed ones today? Well, I'm glad to be in that company, in that number. "Blessed" expresses, oh, that glorious, wonderful joy of sins forgiven! This is the greatest statement of all, and David knew this by experience.

"Iniquities" is lawlessness. David deliberately broke the law. He didn't do it ignorantly. He knew what he did, and he was forgiven.

"Are forgiven" refers to a definite and complete act of remission. A hard-boiled judge may under certain circumstances remit sins. But this speaks of the tenderness of God by taking the sinner into His arms of love and receiving him with affection. His sins are covered. How? Because Jesus Christ died and shed His blood, my friend.

Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin [[Rom. 4:8](#)].

In other words, joyful is the man whose sin the Lord will not put to his account. David was a great sinner. And God put away his sin, as Nathan informed him. Nathan said to David, ". . . The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die" ([2Sam. 12:13](#)). Nevertheless, David was chastened. David set his own penalty when he responded to Nathan's account of the rich man who took the poor man's ewe lamb: "And he shall restore the lamb fourfold . . ." ([2Sam. 12:6](#)). Four of David's children were killed -- the child of Bathsheba, Amnon his firstborn, Absalom, and Adonijah. Sorrow plagued David all the days of his life. David's guilt was not put on his account, though -- another bore it for him. Little wonder that he could say, "Joyful is the man whose sin the Lord will in no wise put to his account."

Abraham Justified By Faith (4:9-25)

Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness [[Rom. 4:9](#)].

The argument now returns to Abraham to illustrate that justification is universal. Since David has spoken of the joy of the man under law who has been forgiven, the answer of the Jew would be that David belonged to the circumcision and only the circumcision could expect this joy. For this reason Paul returns to Abraham to show that Abraham was justified before the Law was given and also before he was circumcised.

How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision [[Rom. 4:10](#)].

God made the promise to him, and he believed God long before there was any kind of agreement made at all -- other than that God said He would do it. Abraham believed the naked Word of God.

And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:

And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.

For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith [[Rom. 4:11-13](#)].

God made that promise to Abraham long before circumcision was introduced. Abraham just believed God; that's all.

For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect:

Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.

Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace [[Rom. 4:14-16a](#)].

You see, God saved Abraham by faith alone.

Now notice something else here. Abraham was justified actually by faith in the resurrection.

And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb [[Rom. 4:19](#)].

There is no merit in faith itself. You see, there was nothing around Abraham in which he could trust -- nothing that he could feel, nothing that he could see, nothing. All he did was believe God. That's important.

He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God [[Rom. 4:20](#)].

He was not double-minded. That's the whole thought here. He looked away from his circumstances to the promise. He believed the promise, in spite of the fact that the circumstances nullified it. He put confidence in the promise because of the One who gave it, thus giving worship to God. You see, man was created to glorify God, but by disobedience he did the opposite. And, my friend, the only way you can glorify God is to believe Him.

And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform [[Rom. 4:21](#)].

"Fully persuaded" means that he was filled brimful. There was no room for doubt.

And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness [[Rom. 4:22](#)].

This faith in the resurrection -- life from the dead -- is what God accepted from Abraham in lieu of his own righteousness, which he did not have. God declared Abraham righteous for his faith in the promise of God to raise up a son out of the tomb of death, that is, the womb of Sarah. God promises eternal life to those who believe that He raised up His own Son from the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, the place of death.

Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him;

But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead [[Rom. 4:23-24](#)].

The womb of Sarah was a tomb. It was a place of death. But out of that came life. Abraham believed God. And this is what the Lord Jesus meant when He said, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad" ([John 8:56](#)).

Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification [[Rom. 4:25](#)].

That is faith, not only in the death of Christ, but also in His resurrection. Matthew Henry put it like this: "In Christ's death He paid our debt; in His resurrection He took out our acquittance." God justifies those who believe in the death and resurrection of Christ. How wonderful this is! Have you gone that far with God? Do you believe Him?

Chapter 5

THEME: Benefits of salvation; sanctification of the saint

As we come to the fifth chapter of Romans, we find Paul answering one of the questions that would naturally arise in the minds of those who had read his epistle to this point. He has told us that we have been saved by the redemption that we have in Christ, the redemption that had been purchased at tremendous price upon the Cross. It delivers us from the guilt of sin so that the sin question has been settled. This means that we will not come before God for judgment which will determine our salvation. It means that an eternal home is waiting for those who have trusted Christ. Now the question Paul will answer is: What about the here and now?

I have heard liberal preachers say, "I do not believe in a religion of the hereafter; I believe in a religion of the here and now." In San Francisco in the early days of the "hippie" movement, I was talking to a young vagrant on a street corner, and he didn't want to hear about Christianity. He said, "That's 'pie in the sky by and by' religion, and I don't care for that." And so I said to this young fellow, "Then you believe in getting your pie here and now and not by and by?" He said, "That's right." I told him that it didn't look to me like he was getting very much pie in the here and now, and he admitted that he wasn't. So I said, "Well, it is tragic indeed to miss the pie here and now, and miss it hereafter also."

Paul now is going to show that there are certain benefits that accrue to the believer right here and now when he trusts Christ, when he's been justified by faith in the redemption that we have in Christ. And actually these are benefits that the world is very much concerned about, and would like to have them.

Many people are spending a great deal of money today trying to attain the things that are the present benefits of every believer. That doesn't mean that all believers are enjoying them. However, God has them on the table for you, and all you have to do is reach over and take them (see [Eph. 1:3](#)).

Benefits Of Salvation (5:1)

1. Peace (5:1)

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ [[Rom. 5:1](#)].

"Therefore being justified by faith" refers to the one act of faith the moment we trust Christ.

"We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The Bible mentions several kinds of peace. First, there's world peace. The United Nations has worked for it as the old League of Nations did. They didn't get anywhere in the past, and they're not getting anywhere today. As I write this, a great many people believe that if you protest loudly enough you can bring peace to the world by human manipulation or psychological gyrations. Well, my friend, as long as there is sin in the hearts of men, there never will be peace in the world -- not until the Prince of Peace comes. Christ will bring peace on this earth. But world peace is not the kind of peace that Paul is talking about here.

Then there is that peace which is known as tranquility of soul. That is the peace to which the Lord Jesus referred when He said to His disciples, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you . . ." ([John 14:27](#)). This is a peace that comes to certain believers who have trusted Christ and who are resting in Him and who are doing His will. I wish I could say that I experience this peace all the time. I do not. I recognize that it is available for every believer today. I suppose I am like most believers in that I have up and down experiences. There are times when this peace floods my soul, and it is wonderful. But there are times when I am under pressure or under tension or when I am weary and this peace somehow eludes me. However, Paul is not referring to the peace of personal tranquility.

Then there is a third kind of peace which Paul mentions to the Philippian believers -- "the peace that passeth all understanding" (see [Phil. 4:7](#)). Well, since it passes all understanding, I certainly don't know what it is, and I have a notion that you don't know either.

The peace Paul is talking about, which he lists as the first benefit of salvation, is "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." This is the peace that comes to the soul of one who has trusted Christ as Savior and knows that God no longer has any charge against him, that he is no longer guilty. He knows that God, who had to be against him in the past, is now for him. He knows that he has a salvation that is permanent and eternal. This is the peace that comes because of sins forgiven and because everything is right between you and God. You will notice that Paul mentions again and again that we have peace through the blood of Jesus Christ, which means that everything is all right between our soul and God. That is wonderful peace!

This was explained to me by a wonderful pastor when I was a young boy in my teens. He said that when man sinned in the Garden of Eden, not only did man run away from God - - and found himself alienated from the life of God, with no capacity for God and no inclination to turn to Him -- but God also had to turn away from man. Then when Christ died on the Cross, God turned around, so that now a holy God can say to a lost sinner, "Come." His arms are outstretched. He says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will rest you" ([Matt. 11:28](#), literal translation mine). This is peace, the rest of redemption.

My friend, God is reconciled. You don't have to do anything to reconcile Him, as we have seen. A great many people think that you have to shed tears to reconcile God. You don't need tears to soften the heart of God! You don't have to do anything. Because Christ died on the Cross, God is reconciled today. The message of the gospel is, "Be ye

reconciled to God." The next move is yours. When you accept His salvation, then you experience peace that your sins have been forgiven.

There are a great many people who pillow their heads at night, not knowing what it is to have peace in their hearts. Oh, how many weary souls today are laboring with a guilt complex and would love to go somewhere to have that guilt removed from their souls! A Christian psychologist told me several years ago, "The only place you can have a guilt complex removed is at the Cross of Christ." Peace is the first wonderful benefit that accrues to the child of God.

2. Access (5:2)

By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God [[Rom. 5:2](#)].

"Access" means that you and I have access to God in prayer. It's wonderful to have someone to go and talk to about yourself and about your problems and about your friends and your loved ones. Today we as children of God have access to a heavenly Father who will listen to us here and who does answer our prayer. Now, that doesn't mean He answers it the way you want it answered, but He always hears you, and sometimes He shows He is a good heavenly Father by saying no. He will answer according to His wisdom, not according to our will. You will notice that we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand.

3. Hope (5:2)

"And rejoice in hope of the glory of God" is the third benefit. The hope that is mentioned here is the hope that the Scriptures hold out. Paul said to a young preacher by the name of Titus, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" ([Titus 2:13](#)). (I don't think looking for the Great Tribulation is very much of a hope. I'm certainly not looking for it because that would be a dread rather than a hope.) To look for the Lord to come and take His church out of this world, that's a glorious hope, and it will take place at His appearing.

Now, the child of God has this hope. That means he has a future. He has something to look forward to. You and I are living in a day when man has all the comforts of life in an affluent society, but the interesting thing is, he has no future. James Reston, one of the reporters and editors of the New York Times, several years ago made the statement that in Washington there is a feeling that the problems have so mounted and multiplied that man is totally incapable of solving the problems of this world. The Word of God, you know, goes along with that -- I suppose that was one time that the New York Times and the Bible agreed. What a dark outlook is being given to us today, and the band can play and you can wave the flag all you want, but you'd better face facts: there's a cancer in the body politic. One of the last statements that Bernard Shaw made before his death was that he had pinned his hopes on atheism, but he had found that atheism did not solve the problems of the world. Then he made this remarkable comment, "You are looking at an atheist who has lost his faith." When an atheist loses his faith, he has nothing in the world to hold on to.

The world today is looking for a hope, looking for a future. This explains the restlessness that is throughout the world, and I think it explains a great many of the movements of the

present moment. I believe it has driven a great many folk to alcohol and drug addiction and down other avenues that are dead-end streets. Why? Because they've lost hope of the future.

Well, the child of God has a hope, a blessed hope. And he knows that all things are going to work together for good (see [Rom. 8:28](#)). He knows that nothing is going to separate him from the love of God (see [Rom. 8:39](#)). How wonderful that hope is, the blessed hope of the church.

4. Triumph in troubles (5:3-4)

And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

And patience, experience; and experience, hope [[Rom. 5:3-4](#)].

In other words, we joy in troubles, knowing that trouble works patience -- patience doesn't come automatically -- and patience, experience; and experience, hope.

It is quite interesting to see the three words that are associated with trouble. One is joy, another is hope, and the third is patience. God has to work that into us although it is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. In other words, it takes trouble to bring out the best in the believer's life. The only way God can get fruit out of the life of the believer is by pruning the branches. The world does it differently. If you, as an unbeliever, are in a nice, comfortable situation and have no troubles, then you can have fun, you can also be patient, and you may have a little hope as you go along. But that is not the way it is with the child of God. Actually, trouble produces these fruits in our lives.

5. Love of God (5:5)

And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us [[Rom. 5:5](#)].

"The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts" doesn't mean our love for God; it means God's love for us. And this love is made real by the Holy Spirit who is given to us.

6. The Holy Spirit (5:6-8)

This is the first time in the Epistle to the Romans that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is mentioned. This is only a reference to Him in this list of present benefits. We will not come to the ministry of the Holy Spirit until we get to chapter 8 of Romans where He is mentioned more than twenty times. Here we are simply told that the Holy Spirit is given to every believer -- not to only some believers, but to all believers. Even to the Corinthians Paul wrote, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" ([1Cor. 6:19](#)). The Corinthian believers were certainly a carnal lot -- in fact, Paul called them babes in Christ -- yet the Holy Spirit indwelt them. That's wonderful! I'm glad that, when I came to Christ, I got everything God offers in salvation.

And it is the Holy Spirit who actualizes, or makes real, the love of God in the hearts of believers -- that is, God's love for us. Today we need to be conscious of the fact that God

loves us. How people need to be assured of that in their lives! Only the Spirit of God can make real to us God's love.

Now notice how Paul explains the love of God.

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly [[Rom. 5:6](#)].

Christ died for the ungodly -- not for the good boys and girls, but for ungodly sinners -- those who actually were His enemies, who hated Him, to whom He said when they were crucifying Him, ". . . Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do . . ." ([Luke 23:34](#)). And, friend, you and I were numbered with the ungodly.

A few years ago I talked to a young man who had love written on his cap, on his funny coat, on his trousers, and even on his shoes! I asked him why. He said, "Why, man, God is love." I agreed with that. Then he said, "God saved me by His love." I replied, "I disagree with that. God does not save you by His love."

Now that seems startling to a great many folk even today. But actually, friend, God does not save you by His love. You see, God is more than love; He is holy and He is righteous. God cannot open the back door of heaven and slip sinners in under the cover of darkness, and He can't let down the bars of heaven and bring sinners in. If He does that, He's no better than a crooked judge who lets a criminal off. God has to do something for the guilt of sinners. There must be judgment, you see. However, God does love us. Regardless of who you are or what you have done, God loves you. It is wrong to say to children, "If you are mean, Willie, or if you do what is wrong, God won't love you." The interesting thing is that God will love little Willie, regardless of what he does. And He loves you. You can't keep God from loving you. Now you can get to the place that you do not experience the love of God. For instance, you can't keep the sun from shining, but you can get out of the sunshine. You can put up an umbrella of sin, an umbrella of indifference, an umbrella of stepping out of the will of God, which will keep His love from shining on you. Although all these things will remove you from experiencing God's love, He still loves you.

As I was talking to this young fellow with love written on his clothing, I asked him to show me a verse in the Bible that said God saves us by love. Of course he didn't know any. I said, "The Word of God says, 'For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God' ([Eph. 2:8](#)). God saves us by His grace, not by His love. 'God so loved the world' that He saved the world? Oh, no -- He couldn't. A holy God has to be true to His character. But He did this: '. . . God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life' ([John 3:16](#))."

God has demonstrated His love for you, my friend, in that He gave His Son to die for you. He paid the penalty for your sin, and our holy God now can save you if you come His way. Of course, you'll have to come His way. There is a mistaken idea today that you can come to Him your way. This isn't your universe; it's His universe. You and I don't make the rules. He makes the rules. And He says that no man comes to Him except through Christ (see [John 14:6](#)).

Now notice how he continues.

For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die [[Rom. 5:7](#)].

Do you know any folk who would die for you? Could you put upon the fingers of one hand those who would be willing to die for you? By the way, could you put upon one finger those who love you enough to die for you? Well, you certainly could put it upon one finger, because God loved you enough to send His Son to die for you. And if it were necessary, He would appear today to die for you again, if it would take that to save you. He loves you that much.

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us [[Rom. 5:8](#)].

He died for you and me. That is where God revealed His love. And God doesn't save us by love. He now saves us by grace because the guilt of sin has been removed by the death of Christ, and He can hold out His arms and save you today.

7. Deliverance from wrath (5:9-10)

Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him [[Rom. 5:9](#)].

The "wrath" mentioned here is what the prophets spoke of: "That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness" ([Zeph. 1:15](#)). What is the great day of wrath? It is what the Lord Jesus called the Great Tribulation. And Paul tells believers that we shall be "saved from wrath." We have been saved from the penalty of sin; He is constantly saving us today from the power of sin; and He is going to save us in the future from the presence of sin. That means that every believer will leave this earth at the Rapture. We will escape that day of wrath, not because we are worthy, but because we have been saved by the grace of God. We have been saved by grace; we live by the grace of God; and ten billion years from today we will still be in heaven by the grace of God. We are saved from wrath through Him -- through Christ.

For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life [[Rom. 5:10](#)].

You see, He died down here to save us; He lives up yonder to keep us saved.

8. Joy (5:11)

And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement [[Rom. 5:11](#)].

We joy in God! I think this is one of the most wonderful statements we have in Scripture. It means that right now, wherever you are, whatever your problems are, my friend, you can joy, rejoice, in God. Just think of it! You can rejoice that He lives and that He is who He is. You can rejoice because He has provided a salvation for us and is willing to save us sinners and bring us into His presence someday. He has worked out a plan to save us

because of His love for us. Isn't that enough to make you rejoice? Oh, the child of God should have joy in his heart. He doesn't need to go around smiling like a Cheshire cat, but he certainly ought to have a joyful heart. I love the song, "Let's Just Praise the Lord." These are the eight wonderful benefits of salvation. Let's just praise the Lord!

Sanctification Of The Saint (5:11)

We have seen the salvation of the sinner; now we are coming to the sanctification of the saint. In salvation we are declared righteous, but God wants to do more than declare a person righteous. Justification does not make a person righteous. It means that before God's holy court, before the bar of heaven, a lost sinner is now declared righteous, but his heart has not been changed. My friend, if you think God intends to leave a sinner in his sin, you are wrong. God wants to make us the kind of folk we should be. So God also has a plan in salvation whereby He not only declares a sinner righteous, but He is also going to make a sinner righteous. That is, God provides a way that a sinner may grow in grace and become sanctified (set apart) for God.

The remainder of this chapter is labeled potential sanctification. Now let me warn you that you may find this difficult to understand and difficult to accept.

In potential sanctification we have what is known as the federal headship of Adam and Christ.

Headship Of Adam (5:12-14)

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned [Rom. 5:12].

Let me give you my own translation of this verse, which may bring out the meaning a little better: "On this account (the plan of salvation for all by one Redeemer) just as through one man sin entered (as a principle) into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread throughout upon all men on the ground of the fact that all sinned."

Now we need to understand that the sin we're talking about is the sin of Adam, that first sin of Adam -- not his second one or his third one or his fourth one -- his first sin of disobedience in the Garden of Eden, which brought death upon all of his offspring.

Now that brings me back to consider something that is very important: You and I are sinners, as we have said, in four different ways. (1) We are sinners because we commit acts of sin. Also, (2) we're sinners by nature (sin doesn't make us sinners, but we sin because we have that nature). (3) We are in the state of sin. God has declared the entire human family under sin. (4) Finally, you and I are also sinners by imputation. That is, Adam acted for the human race because he was the head of it.

It is on the basis of the federal headship of Adam that now God is able through the federal headship of Christ to save those who will trust Christ. This is what theologians have labeled the federal headship. Adam and Christ are representatives of the human race. Adam is the natural head of the human race. By the way, I accept that. I saw a bumper sticker that interested me a great deal. It read, "My ancestors were human -- sorry about yours." This lays in the dust the idea that you can be a Christian, believing the

Word of God, and also accept the theory of evolution. Adam is the head of the human family. That is what Paul is saying here -- he is the natural head. And his one act of disobedience plunged his entire offspring into sin. We are all made sinners by Adam's sin.

First, let's see what this does not mean. It does not refer to the fact that we have a sinful nature inherited from Adam. It is true that I got a sinful nature from my father, and he from his father, and on back. Also, I passed on that nature to my child and to my grandchildren. The first grandchild was such a wonderful little fellow, I was beginning to doubt the total depravity of man. But as he began growing up, he began to manifest this depraved nature. Now I have a second grandson, a redheaded boy, and does he have a temper! Now I am convinced again of the total depravity of man. I have seen a manifestation in these two little fellows of a nature they got from their grandmother (I think!). Although you and I do have sinful natures and do pass them on to our offspring, this particular verse does not refer to that fact.

Also, the verse before us that says "all have sinned" does not mean that we are guilty of a sinful act. Of course, we are guilty, but that is not what the verse is talking about.

Now let's see what it does mean. It does refer to the fact that we are so vitally connected with the first father of the human race that before we even had a human nature, before we had committed a sin, even before we were born, we were sinners in Adam.

Maybe you don't like that. But God says that that is the way it is. We see it illustrated in [Hebrews 7:9](#), "And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham." That is, long before Levi was even born, he paid tithes to Melchisedec. How could he do it? "For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him" ([Heb. 7:10](#)). In just such a way, Adam's sin was imputed to us. What Adam did, we did. God could put all of us in a Garden of Eden and give us the same test He gave to Adam. Do you think you would do any better with your sinful nature than Adam did without a sinful nature? I don't think so. We might as well accept the fact that Adam's one act of disobedience made all of us sinners.

Now let me give you a personal illustration. My grandfather lived in Northern Ireland although he was Scottish. Even in his day they were fighting, and he didn't like it. So he emigrated to the United States. Now, what my grandfather did, I did. When he left Northern Ireland, I left Northern Ireland. And I thank God he left. I really appreciate what Grandpa did for me! What he did, I did because I was in him. The reason I was born in America is because of what he had done.

In this same way Adam's sin is imputed to us.

We have already seen that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us by the death of Christ. Christ is the head of a new race, a new redeemed man, and the church is His body, a new creation. The hymn writer put it accurately: "The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord. She is His new creation by water and the word." The church is a new creation, a new race. This is what Paul says, "And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. . . . The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven" ([1Cor. 15:45, 47](#)). Now,

there will not be a third Adam, for Christ is the last Adam. There will be the third and fourth and myriads of men because Christ is the second man, but He's not the second Adam. He is the last Adam. He is the head of a new race. That is something that is preliminary.

As we go through this section, we will notice an expression that is very meaningful. It is "much more." What Paul is going to say is that we have "much more" in Christ than we lost in Adam. That expression occurred in [verse 9](#), "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." And in [verse 10](#), "Much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." There is a great deal of "much more" in this section. In [1Corinthians 15, verses 21-22](#), I read this, "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Now, death came by Adam. And if you want proof that the first sin of Adam was a representative act, consider why a little infant will die when that little child has not committed a sinful act. Well, that little infant belongs to the race of Adam. In Adam all die. You see, God did not create man to die. God had something better in store for man and does today.

Now, with that thought in mind, let's move on to [verse 13](#).

(For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law [[Rom. 5:13](#)].

From Adam to Moses sin was in the world, but at that time sin was not a transgression; it was merely rebellion against God. I think this is the reason God did not exact the death penalty from Cain when he murdered his brother. I cannot think of a deed more dastardly than what he did, but at that time God had not yet said, "Thou shalt not kill" ([Exod. 20:13](#)). Actually, God put a mark on Cain to protect him. A little later on you find that one of the sons of Cain, Lamech, tells why he killed a man. He says, "I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt. If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold" ([Gen. 4:23-24](#)). You see, Lamech had a reason. Also, that generation that was destroyed at the Flood was saturated with sin. They were incurable incorrigibles. "And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" ([Gen. 6:5](#)). But not one of them broke the Ten Commandments -- because there were no Ten Commandments then. But they were judged because they were sinners. And, friend, that answers the question about the heathen being lost who haven't heard the gospel. The answer is that all men belong to a lost race. It may be difficult for you and me to accept this fact, but you and I have been born into a lost race. We're not a lovely people. We are not the product of evolution -- onward and upward forever with everything getting better. You and I belong to a lost race, and we need to be redeemed. Even the very thoughtlife of man is alienated from God.

Somebody may say, "Then I think God is obligated to save all of us." No, He is not. Suppose that you could go down to an old marshy lake covered with scum where there are hundreds of turtles, and you take a turtle out of there. And you teach this turtle to fly. Then this turtle goes back to the lake and says to the other turtles, "Wouldn't you like to learn to fly?" I think they'd laugh at the turtle. They'd say, "No! we like it down here. We don't want to learn to fly." And that is the condition of lost mankind today. People don't

want to be saved. People are lost, alienated from God. Now, that's a great truth that does not soak into our minds easily, because we have that lost nature. We just love to think that we're wonderful people. But we are not, my friend.

Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come [[Rom. 5:14](#)].

Paul is personifying death. He speaks of the fact that death reigned like a king from Adam to Moses. Although he had not broken the Ten Commandments -- because they hadn't yet been given -- man was yet a sinner.

The word death is used in a threefold way in Scripture. There is what is known as physical death. That refers only to the body, and it means a separation of the spirit from the body. This death comes to man because of Adam's sin. Also, there is spiritual death, which is separation from and rebellion against God. And we inherit this nature from Adam, by the way. We are alienated from God, and we are dead in trespasses and sins (see [Eph. 2:1](#)). That is the picture that Scripture presents. Then there is eternal death. That is the third death that Scripture speaks of, and it is eternal separation from God. And, unless man is redeemed, eternal death inevitably follows (see [Rev. 21:8](#)).

Adam is here definitely declared to be a type of Christ -- "who is the figure" or "he is the type of him who was to come." That is, Adam is a type of Christ.

Headship Of Christ (5:15-21)

But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many [[Rom. 5:15](#)].

We have "much more" in Christ. Today we are looking forward to something more wonderful than the Garden of Eden. As the writer of Hebrews tells us, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" ([Heb. 11:13](#)).

And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification [[Rom. 5:16](#)].

Now I recognize that this is a difficult section, and this is one of the most difficult passages. To simplify it, all this section means is this: one transgression plunged the race into sin; and one act of obedience and the death of Christ upon the Cross makes it possible for lost man to be saved.

For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) [[Rom. 5:17](#)].

Paul has previously stated ([v. 14](#)) that death reigns as king. Death came to the throne by one man who committed only one offense -- that is, the original sin, the one act, involved

the race. Here Paul presents another kingdom which is superior to the kingdom of death. It is the kingdom of life. It is offered to the subjects of the kingdom of death through the superabundance of grace. Man has only to receive it. The King of the kingdom of life is Jesus Christ. The gift comes through Him.

Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life [[Rom. 5:18](#)].

This is the underlying principle of the imputation of sin and the imputation of righteousness. This is the doctrine of the federal headship of the race in Adam and Christ.

For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous [[Rom. 5:19](#)].

Here Paul sums up his argument on federal headship: Adam's one act of disobedience made all sinners -- not just possessors of a sin nature, but guilty of the act of sin. Christ's obedience -- His death and resurrection -- makes it possible for God to declare righteous the sinner who believes in Him.

Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound [[Rom. 5:20](#)].

When God gave the Law, He gave with it a sacrificial system. Then later on Christ came to fulfill that part of it also. In other words, God has given to the human race, a lost race, an opportunity to be delivered from the guilt of sins -- not the nature of sin. You and I will have that old sin nature throughout our lives.

That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord [[Rom. 5:21](#)].

"As sin hath reigned unto death" -- you and I are living in a world where sin reigns. Do you want to know who is king of the earth today? Well, Scripture tells us that Satan is the prince. He is the one who goes up and down this earth seeking whom he may devour (see [1Pet. 5:8](#)). "Sin hath reigned unto death," and the cemeteries are still being filled because of that.

"Even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." He is calling out a people -- out of a lost race -- and He is "teaching turtles to fly" if they want to. However, the turtle nature doesn't want to fly. Man is alienated from God; he has a sin nature. Now God offers salvation to a lost race.

The claims of God's righteousness are fully met in the death of Christ. The Kingdom is fully and firmly established on the Cross of Christ. All other ground is sinking sand. The believing sinner now has eternal life by being united to the last Adam, the raised and glorified Savior. This makes possible the sanctification of the saved sinner, which is the theme of the next chapter.

Chapter 6

THEME: Positional sanctification; practical sanctification

We discovered in chapter 5 that sin has come through the headship of Adam and that sanctification comes through the headship of Christ. Because of the natural headship of Adam, sin was imputed to the human family. But there is another head of the human family, and that is Christ. He brings life and righteousness. He removes the guilt of sin from us. And on that basis, He can move into the lives of those who trust in Him and begin to make them righteous. That is, He can begin to make them good.

Now here in chapter 6 we begin with what I have labeled "positional sanctification."

Let me say a word about this matter of sanctification. There is a difference between justification and sanctification. These are two words from the Bible, my friend, that you ought to cozy up to and get acquainted with. There is a difference between merely being saved from sin and being made the type of folk we should be because we are separated unto God.

Identification with Christ for justification is also the grounds of our sanctification. We are in Christ. These are two different subjects, but they are not mutually exclusive. Justification is the foundation on which all the superstructure of sanctification rests.

Now let me put it like this: justification is an act; sanctification is a work. Justification took place the moment you trusted Christ -- you were declared righteous; the guilt was removed. Then God began a work in you that will continue throughout your life. I believe in instantaneous salvation, but sanctification is a lifelong process. In other words, justification is the means; sanctification is the end. Justification is for us; sanctification is in us. Justification declares the sinner righteous; sanctification makes the sinner righteous. Justification removes the guilt and penalty of sin; sanctification removes the growth and the power of sin.

God is both an exterior and interior decorator. He is an exterior decorator in that He enables us to stand before Him because He has paid the penalty and removed the guilt of sin from us. But He is also an interior decorator. He moves into our hearts and lives by the power of the Holy Spirit to make us the kind of Christians we should be. God does not leave us in sin when He saves us.

This does not imply that sanctification is a duty that is derived from justification. It is a fact that proceeds from it, or rather, both justification and sanctification flow from being in Christ, crucified and risen. The sinner appropriates Christ by faith for both his salvation and his sanctification. We're told in [1Corinthians 1:30](#), "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

Up to chapter 6, Paul does not discuss the holy life of the saint. From chapter 6 on, Paul does not discuss the salvation of the sinner. He wasn't talking about the saint and the life he is to live when he was discussing salvation. Now he is discussing that. Therefore, the subject of this chapter is the ability of God to make sinners, whom He has declared righteous, actually righteous. He shows that the justified sinner cannot continue in sin because he died and rose again in Christ. To continue in sin leads to slavery to sin and is

the additional reason for not continuing in sin. The believer has a new nature now, and he is to obey God. This section delivers us from the prevalent idea today that a believer can do as he pleases. Union with Christ in His death and resurrection means that He is now our Lord and our Master. He gives us freedom, but that freedom is not license, as we are going to see.

Positional Sanctification (6:1-12)

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? [[Rom. 6:1](#)].

Paul is being argumentative. He wasn't, you remember, when he was discussing sin. Rather, he was stating facts. He wasn't trying to prove anything. He just looked at life in the raw, right down where the rubber meets the road, and said that we are all sinners. However, now he uses this idiomatic question which opens this chapter, and he is argumentative. In the Greek the question is asked in such a way that there is only one answer. He precedes the question with "What shall we say then?" After you see God's wonderful salvation, what can you say to it? Our only fitting response is hallelujah! What else can you say to God's wonderful salvation? Now Paul's argumentative question is this: "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?"

And this, my friend, is God's answer to the question of whether, after we are saved, we can continue to live in sin. The answer is, "God forbid" or "perish the thought!" or "may it never be!"

God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? [[Rom. 6:2](#)].

The very fact that Paul is asking this question makes it obvious that he understood justification to mean a declaration of righteousness; that it did not mean to make a person good, but to declare a person good. Justification means that the guilt or the penalty of sin is removed, not the power of sin in this life.

Now he is going to talk about removing the power of sin. If God has declared you to be righteous and has removed the guilt of your sin, then, my friend, you cannot continue in sin. The answer is, "God forbid!"

"How shall we, that are dead to sin" -- this is something that is misunderstood. We are never dead to sin as long as we are in this life. The literal translation is, "How shall we who have died to sin." Note this distinction. That means we died in the person of our substitute, Jesus Christ. We died to sin in Christ. But we are never dead to sin. Any honest person knows he never reaches the place where he is dead to sin. He does reach the place where he wants to live for God, but he recognizes he still has that old sin nature.

It is verses like that that have led a group of sincere folk, whom I call super-duper saints - - I hope I'm not being unfair to them -- to feel they have reached an exalted plane where they do not commit sin. One such group is a branch of those who teach the "victorious life." They feel they have reached the pinnacle of perfection. There are different brands of these, I know, but one group was especially obnoxious several years ago in Southern California. One young man approached me following a morning worship service, and he

asked, "Are you living the victorious life?" I think I shocked him when I said, "No, I'm not!" Then I asked him, "Are you?" Well, he beat around the bush and didn't want to give me a direct answer. He said he tried to. And I said, "Wait a minute, that's not the question. You asked me if I am living it, and I said no. Now you answer me yes or no." And to this good day he hasn't answered me. Like most of them, he was a very anemic-looking fellow; I suspected he was a fugitive from a blood bank. He continued arguing his case. "Well, doesn't the Scripture say, 'I am crucified with Christ?' and doesn't it say that we are dead to sin?" I said, "No, that is not what the Scriptures say. We died to sin in Christ -- that's our position -- but we are never dead to sin in this life. You have a sinful nature; I have a sinful nature; and we'll have it as long as we are in this life." He persisted, "Then what does it mean when it says we are crucified with Christ?" So I told him, "When Christ died over nineteen hundred years ago, that is when we died. We died in Him, and we were raised in Him, and we are joined now to a living Christ. This is the great truth that is there. I don't know about you, but I'm not able to crucify myself. The very interesting thing is that you can kill yourself in a variety of ways -- by poison, with a gun, by jumping off a building -- but you cannot crucify yourself. Maybe you can drive the nails into one hand on a cross, but how are you going to fasten the other hand to the cross? You cannot do it. How are you going to crucify yourself? You cannot do it. My young friend, you were crucified over nineteen hundred years ago when Christ died."

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into this death? [[Rom. 6:3](#)].

This again is a verse that has been misunderstood. If you find water in this verse, you have missed the meaning.

Many years ago the late Dr. William L. Pettingill was conducting a conference in the church I was pastoring, and as I was driving him back to the hotel after a service, I said, "Dr. Pettingill, did I understand you to say there is no water in the sixth chapter of Romans?" (I should add that he was the strongest "immersionist" I have ever met in my life.) He laughed and said, "No, that's not exactly what I said. I said that if all you see in [Romans 6](#) is water, you have missed the point." I said, "Well, if you go that far, that is wonderful for me because it confirms the great truth that is here."

What did Paul mean by the word baptize in this third verse? I do not think he refers to water baptism primarily. Don't misunderstand me; I believe in water baptism, and I believe that immersion best sets forth what is taught here. But actually he is talking about identification with Christ. You see, the translators did not translate the Greek word baptizo, they merely transliterated it. That is they just spelled the Greek word out in English, because baptizo has so many meanings. In my Greek lexicon there are about twenty meanings for this word. Actually baptizo could refer to dyeing your hair. In fact, there was a group in Asia Minor who dyed their hair purple; and they belonged to a baptizo group. But here in [Romans 6:3](#) Paul is speaking about identification with Jesus Christ. We were baptized or identified into His death. In [1Corinthians 12:13](#) Paul says, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body . . ." We are identified in the death of Christ, as Paul will explain in the next verse.

Now Paul is going to say that there are three things essential to our sanctification. Two of them are positional; one of them is very practical. For the two that are positional, we are

to know something. Every gadget that you buy has instructions with it. When I buy a toy for one of my grandsons, I take it out of the box, and I try to follow instructions for assembling it -- and sometimes it is very difficult for me to do. Well, living the Christian life is such an important thing that it comes with instructions. There are certainly things we are to know. We are to know that when Christ died over nineteen hundred years ago, we were identified with Him. Let me make it personal. Nineteen hundred years ago, they led me outside of an oriental city by the name of Jerusalem. By the way, I stood at that spot not too long ago. I looked up to Gordon's Calvary, the Place of the Skull, Golgotha. I tried to visualize the One who died there. When He died there over nineteen hundred years ago, He took Vernon McGee there. I was the one who was guilty. He was not guilty. Don't argue with me about whether the Jews crucified Christ -- He died on the Roman cross -- but let's not argue that. My sin put Him up there, and your sin put Him up there, my friend. We were identified with Jesus Christ. That is something that we should know, and it is very important for us to know. We're identified with him.

Now Paul will amplify this:

Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life [[Rom. 6:4](#)].

"We are buried with him by baptism into death" -- just as we are identified with Christ in His death, likewise are we identified with Christ in His resurrection. We are joined today to a living Christ. In other words, our sins have already been judged; we are already raised; and we are yonder seated with Christ in the heavenlies. My friend, there are only two places for your sins: either they were on Christ when he died for you over nineteen hundred years ago -- because you have trusted Him as your Savior -- or they are on you today, and judgment is ahead for you. There is no third place for them.

"We are buried with him by baptism [identification] into [His] death." Frankly, although I was reared a Presbyterian, I think that immersion is a more accurate type of this identification. I think the Spirit's baptism is the real baptism. Water is the ritual baptism, but I do think that immersion sets forth the great spiritual truth that is here. This is the reason a child of God should be baptized in water in our day. It is a testimony that he is joined to the living Christ. That is all important.

What did Peter mean when he said in [1Peter 3:21](#), ". . . baptism doth also now save us . . ." ? How does it save us? Well, in the preceding verse he talks about eight souls who were saved in the ark. They went through the waters of judgment inside the ark. The folk in the water were those who were outside the ark, and they were drowned. The eight people in the ark didn't get wet at all -- yet Peter says they were saved by baptism. Obviously the word baptism has nothing to do with water in this instance; rather it means identification. They were identified with the ark. They had believed God, and they had gotten into the ark. God saw that little boat floating on the surface of the water. Now today God sees Christ; He doesn't see Vernon McGee because I am in Christ. He is my ark today. Christ went down into the waters of death, and we are in Christ. And we are raised with Him. We are joined to Him. This is important. Don't miss it. If you do, you will miss one of the greatest truths of the Christian life.

For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death,
we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection [[Rom. 6:5](#)].

In other words, if we are united by being grafted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also united by growth -- grafted, vitally connected -- in the likeness of His resurrection. We actually share the life of Christ somewhat as a limb grafted into a tree shares the life of the tree. The life of Christ is our life now.

Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin [[Rom. 6:6](#)].

"Knowing this" -- these are things we know.

When Paul says your "old man" is crucified with Him, he doesn't mean your father; he means your old nature is crucified with Him. "That the body of sin might be destroyed" -- the word destroyed is *katargeo*, meaning "to make of none effect, to be paralyzed or canceled or nullified" -- "that henceforth we should not serve sin." Paul is not saying that the old nature is eradicated. He is saying that since the old man was crucified, the body of sin has been put out of business, so that from now on we should not be in bondage to sin.

For he that is dead is freed from sin [[Rom. 6:7](#)].

For he who died is declared righteous from sin. He is acquitted. That is his position.

Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him [[Rom. 6:8](#)].

If we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also be living with Him both here and hereafter. We share His resurrection life today, and we will be raised from the dead someday.

Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more;
death hath no more dominion over him [[Rom. 6:9](#)].

"Knowing" -- this is something else we are to know.

"He ever liveth" is the visitor's chorus. The glorified Christ says, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death" ([Rev. 1:18](#)). The resurrection opens up eternity to Christ, and it will open up eternity to those who will trust Him.

For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God [[Rom. 6:10](#)].

He died one time, but He is alive today. And He ever lives to make intercession for those who are His. Because of this, He can save you right through to the utmost.

Now we come to the second thing that we as believers are to reckon on.

Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord [[Rom. 6:11](#)].

"Reckon" doesn't mean I "reckon" or "suppose," as some of us Texans use it. Rather, we are to count on the fact that we are dead unto sin and alive unto God. We are to reckon (count on it) that our old nature lay in Joseph's tomb over nineteen hundred years ago, but when Christ came back from the dead, we came back from the dead in Him. This is something to count on.

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof [[Rom. 6:12](#)].

That is, don't let sin keep on reigning in your body, that you should obey the desires of the body.

Practical Sanctification (6:13-23)

We have seen that sanctification is positional. That means we are to know something. We are to know God's method of making a sinner the kind of person He wants him to be. While justification merely declared him righteous, removed the guilt of sin, it did not change him in his life. It gave him a new nature. Now he is to know that he was buried with Christ and raised with Him. God wants him to live in the power of the Holy Spirit. The believer is joined to the living Christ. He is to reckon on that fact; he is to count on it. He is to consider it as true. You see, God saved us by faith, and we are to live by faith. Many of us, and that includes this poor preacher, have trusted Him for salvation, but are we trusting Him in our daily living? We are to live by faith.

Now we come to that which is very practical indeed. You are to yield yourself or present yourself to God.

Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God [[Rom. 6:13](#)].

Yield is the same word as present in [Romans 12:1](#); "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God . . ." This is a presentation of yourself for service. Yield is the same word, and it means "to present yourself." The idea of the surrendered life or the yielded life sounds colorless to so many people. We talk about surrendering and at the same time living the victorious life, and they seem to be a contradiction of terms. I like the word present much better -- "Neither present ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin." The reason most of us get into trouble is because we yield ourselves to the old nature. By an act of the will we can yield ourselves to do God's will through the new nature.

A little girl fell out of bed one night and began to cry. Her mother rushed in to her bedroom, picked her up, put her back in bed, and asked her, "Honey, why did you fall out of bed?" And she said, "I think I stayed too close to the place where I got in." And that's the reason a great many of us fall, my friend. It is because we are actually yielding ourselves to the old nature. We're following the dictates of the old nature; that is what gets us into trouble.

Although we will not get rid of that old nature in this life, we are told now, "Yield yourselves unto God." Just as you yield yourself to do sin, you are to yield yourself unto

God "as those that are alive from the dead." You're now alive in Christ. You have a new nature. You've been born again.

"And your members as instruments of righteousness unto God" deals with that which is specific and particular. What is your real problem, friend? I know what mine is. What about yours? Whatever that specific thing is, yield it to God. A bad temper? Well, take that to Him and talk to Him about it. What about a gossiping tongue? A dear lady who attended a "tongues meeting" was asked if she wanted to speak in tongues. She exclaimed, "Oh, my no. I'd like to lose about forty feet off the one I have now!" If your tongue is your problem, yield it to God. And by the way, in this day in which we are living, what about immorality? Sex is the big subject of the hour. My, everybody's getting in on the act today. Is that your sin? Well, you're to yield yourself to God -- your members "as instruments of righteousness unto God." And don't tell me you can't do it. You can do it through the power of the Holy Spirit.

For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace [[Rom. 6:14](#)].

The Law was given to control the old nature. As a believer, you are not to live by the old nature. You have a new nature, and you are to yield yourself or present yourself to God. What a glorious, wonderful privilege it is to present ourselves to Him!

What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid [[Rom 6:15](#)].

Let me give my translation of this verse, which may be helpful: What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under law, but under grace? (Should we commit an act of sin? For you are no more under law, but under grace.) Away with the thought (perish the thought). The form of the question is put differently here than it was back in [verse 1](#). Paul has demonstrated in the past fourteen verses that God's method of sanctification is on the same basis as justification; it is by faith, faith that God can do it. You and I cannot do it. When we learn that we cannot live the Christian life, we have learned a great lesson. Then we are prepared to let Him live it through us.

Paul's question here is whether there should be an assist given to grace to accomplish its high and holy end. In other words, the natural man thinks there ought to be some laws, rules, or regulations given. In the course of the church's history we have had all kinds of groups that have come up with rules for living the Christian life. There were the Puritans, a wonderful group of folk, and we owe a great deal to them, but they had a strict observance of the Sabbath Day (they called Sunday the Sabbath, which, of course, it is not). A strict observance of Sunday was an obsession with them. We have a carry-over of that today. There are a great number of groups who put down certain rules for a believer. Some of our fundamental people have made, not ten commandments, but about twenty new commandments. If the believer does certain things and refrains from doing certain other things, he is living the Christian life. This is the reason, friend, that I oppose the idea that you can become a wonderful Christian by taking some of these short courses being offered today. That's not the way you are to do it. We have a girl in our office who took a course, and, oh, she was enthusiastic. But you ought to see her today. She is really in a depression. Why? Because she tried to do it by rules and did not let Christ do it.

The Christian life is not following certain rules; you can follow rules and regulations and still not be living the Christian life. Somebody asks, "Then what is the Christian life?" The Christian life is to be obedient unto Christ. It means communication with Christ. My friend, do you love Him? That's the important thing. He says, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" ([John 14:15](#), italics mine). Identification with Christ is positional sanctification, as we have seen. That is basic. But obedience to Christ is the experience of sanctification, and that is practical sanctification. It is just as simple as that, my friend. It is not how you walk, but where you walk -- are you walking in the light, walking in fellowship with Christ? Sin will break the fellowship, of course, and then we are to confess our sin. The Lord Jesus said to Peter yonder in the Upper Room, "If I wash you not, you have no part with me" (see [John 13:8](#)). We don't have fellowship with Him unless we confess our sins to Him as we go along. Our part is confession; His part is cleansing (see [1John 1:9](#)). The important thing for you and me is to have fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ and to obey Him. Then we will be living the Christian life.

Vincent once said to Godet, "There is a subtle poison which insinuates itself into the heart even of the best Christian; it is the temptation to say: Let us sin, not that grace may abound, but because it abounds." You see, there are many Christians today who say, "I am saved, and I can do as I please." My friend, if you have been saved by grace, you cannot do as you please, as we shall see in the eighth chapter of Romans.

In his letter to the Galatian believers, Paul makes it clear that there are three ways in which you can live: (1) You can live by law; (2) you can live by license; (3) you can live by liberty. To live by law, everyone puts down some principle. I read of a movie star who said that his whole life was given to sex -- that's his law; he lives by that. Regardless of who you are, if you are living by law, you are living by the old nature. Then, the other extreme which Paul is guarding against here, is license. If you are a child of God, you can't do as you please; you have to do as Christ pleases. You must be obedient to the Lord Jesus Christ, present yourself to Him. This is practical, a great deal more practical than you may realize.

Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey,
his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or
of obedience unto righteousness? [[Rom. 6:16](#)].

"Know ye not" -- when Paul says this, we can be sure that we believers don't know, and we need to know.

"To whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are." Every person who is living is a bond servant to someone or something. I heard a contemporary commentator observe that every person obeys some person or some thing. That is true. You could even be obeying Satan himself. Because of our very natures, we are servants or slaves to something or to somebody.

Now Paul is saying here that the one who is our master is the one whom we obey. If you obey sin, then that is your master. Don't say Christ is your master if you are living in sin; He is not your master. He brings you into the place of liberty. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" ([John 8:36](#)) -- free to do what? You will be free to live for Him, free to obey Him. And the Lord Jesus said again, ". . . Verily, verily, I say

unto you. Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin" ([John 8:34](#)). Now let me use a very homely illustration. There is a very swanky club across the street from the church I served in downtown Los Angeles. It is made up of rich men, and I'm told that it costs several thousand dollars to join this club. If you belong to it, you probably own a Cadillac and have a chauffeur. Well, one day as I looked out the window, I saw a group of chauffeurs standing around talking, and there were several Cadillacs parked there. It was after lunch. Finally, I saw a very distinguished-looking gentleman come out of the club; he made a motion and said something. I couldn't hear what he said, but I saw one of the chauffeurs leave the group of about fifteen men. He went over, opened the door of the car, the distinguished-looking man got in, then he went around, got in the driver's seat and drove off. Now, I came to a very profound conclusion: that chauffeur was the servant or the employee of the man who called him. I don't think those other fourteen chauffeurs were employed by the man in the car because they didn't obey him. Only the man who obeyed him was working for him. He obeyed him because that man was his master. This is what Paul is saying. Regardless of who you are, whomever you obey, whatever you obey, that is your master. You are obeying something or someone.

Now that brings us to a personal question. Is Christ really our master today? Just because you don't murder, you don't lie, you don't do other things the Mosaic Law prohibits, doesn't mean you are living the Christian life. It may mean you are living a good life, but that is all. The Christian life is one where we obey Christ.

But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you [[Rom. 6:17](#)].

In other words, when you were in the world, when you were lost, you obeyed sin. It was natural for you to do that. A man may live such an exemplary life that the chamber of commerce presents him with a medal and a loving cup and makes him the citizen of the year. I overheard such a man talking one time after he had been presented with the cup as the outstanding citizen of a certain community. The language of this man was the foulest language I had ever heard. He may be the outstanding citizen of that community, but it's quite obvious whom he's obeying. He is obeying the Devil! The fact that you obey Christ is the thing that is important.

Now, another thing that we need to understand is that, when you have been saved, you have a new nature that can obey Christ. Paul went through the experience, as we shall see in the next chapter, of being a new Christian and discovering that there was no good in his old nature. Paul says, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing" ([Rom. 7:18](#)). Although many of us have not discovered this, there is no good in us; the old nature has no good in it. You can do a lot to improve it, but you sure can't make it good.

The second startling fact is this: there is no power in the new nature. That's where most of us make our mistake. We think that because we are now Christians, we can walk on top of the world. We can't. We are just as weak as we've ever been before. This is the reason that we have to walk by faith and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Only the Spirit of God can produce the Christian life, as we shall see.

Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness [[Rom. 6:18](#)].

We have been liberated. In other words, He has made it possible for us to live the Christian life. It does not mean that sin has been eradicated or removed. It does mean that now we can live for God.

I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness [[Rom. 6:19](#)].

Let me give you my translation of this verse: I speak in human terms on account of the difficulties of apprehension or the weakness of your human nature; for as you presented or yielded your members slaves for the practice of impurity and to lawlessness; even so now present your members slaves to righteousness.

Paul explains here, I think, why he uses the term servants. He half-way apologizes in the last verse for using it. Slavery was common in the Roman Empire. Out of the 120 million people in the Roman Empire, one-half were slaves. Many Christians were slaves. And the little Epistle to Philemon reveals that freedom was a prized possession and difficult to obtain. Now Paul uses this familiar metaphor which he describes as "human terms." He doesn't mean he is not speaking by inspiration, but he is speaking in a manner which we will understand. And we will understand by these human terms that we are actually slaves.

Now, the religious rulers were insulted when the Lord suggested that they were slaves of sin. Remember the Lord Jesus said to those Jews that believed on Him, ". . . If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin" ([John 8:31-34](#)). Oh, how many men and women today are slaves of sin! Observe the tragedy of our young people who have rebelled against the rules and regulations of the establishment and who have been destroyed by the thousands by drugs and alcohol! You may be delivered from one group with its rules and regulations, but if you don't turn to Christ, you may be getting out of the frying pan and into the fire. What is happening in our culture today is one of the saddest things of our contemporary age. The Lord Jesus says that when you commit sin, you are the servant of sin.

For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness [[Rom. 6:20](#)].

That is, you don't think of serving Christ then; you weren't interested in that. You were free from Him.

What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death [[Rom. 6:21](#)].

You were not only free from Christ, you were fruitless. You did as you pleased. The only fruit was shame. Actually, it was not real freedom, it was license. Do you want to go back to the old life?

I receive scores of letters from young people who were formerly known as "hippies" and have turned to Christ. They are ashamed of that old life. When you drop into sin, does it break your heart? The difference between a child of God and a child of the Devil is that a child of the Devil just loves doing what the Devil wants done. But to the child of God it is a heartbreak.

But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God,
ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life [[Rom. 6:22](#)].

He sets before believers now the golden and glad prospect that is theirs as slaves of God. They are freed from sin which leads to death, and they can have fruit which will abide into eternity. Life eternal is in contrast to death. An illustration of this is seen in the lives of pioneer missionaries. I think of the group of young people, some of them still in their teens, who went out to the Hawaiian Islands in 1819. They gave their lives gladly, joyfully, to the service of Christ. (They have been maligned in recent years. Oh, how the godless tourist loves to hear them ridiculed!) But they laid the foundation for the greatest revival that has taken place since Pentecost -- more people were won to Christ per capita. I never grow weary of hearing their story. They had fruit, my friend. How wonderful it was!

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life
through Jesus Christ our Lord [[Rom. 6:23](#)].

The Devil is the paymaster, and he will see to it that you get paid. If you work for him, the wages of sin is death. But the gift of God is eternal life. And you will receive that gift by faith.

You are saved by faith. You are to live by faith. You are to walk moment by moment by faith. You cannot live for God by yourself any more than you can save yourself. It requires constant dependence upon Him, looking to the Lord Jesus Christ by the power of the Spirit.

Chapter 7

THEME: Shackles of a saved soul; struggle of a saved soul

The theme of sanctification began in the latter part of chapter 5 where it was "potential sanctification." Then in chapter 6 we saw "positional sanctification"; that is, identification with Christ in His death and resurrection. We are to reckon on that, present ourselves to Him, and trust him to live the Christian life through us.

Now in the chapter before us there are two subjects: the shackles of a saved soul and the struggle of a saved soul. The Law cannot produce sanctification in the life of the believer; it merely shackles it. Neither can the believer produce sanctification in his life by depending on the desire of the new nature. Just to say you want to live for Christ won't

get you anywhere. You need to present yourself to Him, recognizing that you are joined to the living Christ.

The importance of this chapter cannot be overemphasized. Let me give you a quotation from Dr. Griffith Thomas: "Dr. Alexander Whyte once said that whenever a new book on Romans comes out and is sent to him by its publisher for consideration, he at once turns to the comments on chapter VII, and according to the view taken of that important section he decides on the value of the entire work." Then Dr. Frederic Godet makes this bold statement: "But it is a hundred to one when a reader does not find the Apostle Paul logical, that he is not understanding his thought." Paul is certainly logical all through this chapter.

When I was a young man, a very wonderful itinerant Bible teacher, who was a great blessing to multitudes of folk, was a great help to me. He was never a pastor, and he taught that we are to detour around the seventh chapter of Romans; we are not to live there. We are to get into the eighth chapter of Romans. For several years I taught that philosophy also. But I have now been a pastor for a long time, and I have come to the conclusion that we are not to miss the seventh chapter of Romans. I am sure that many a pastor wishes his church members would get into the seventh of Romans, because the man who gets into the seventh of Romans will get into the eighth of Romans. I am of the opinion that the way into the eighth chapter is through the seventh chapter -- at least that is the route most of us take. Well, you are not to detour around it, because if you do, you are not on the direct route. It reminds me of a jingle:

To dwell above With the saints in love -- Oh, that will be glory! But to
stay below With the saints I know -- That's another story!

In this "struggle of a saved soul" a believer reaches out and grabs a straw. Sometimes that straw is the Mosaic Law. And he finds that he has gotten hold, not of a straw, nor even of a life preserver, but actually of a sack of cement, and it is pulling him under. He can't live that way. As a result, multitudes of the saints accept defeat as normal Christian living. There are many saints who are satisfied to continue on the low level of a sad, shoddy, sloppy life. God doesn't want us to come that route.

The "powerless sanctification" of this chapter shows us the way we are not to live. Many years ago a cartoon appeared in a daily paper -- when it was popular to make things and repair things yourself -- showing a mild-mannered man in a "Do-It-Yourself Shop." His hands were bandaged, and one arm was in a sling. He was asking the clerk behind the counter, "Do you have any undo-it-yourself kits?" Today we as believers need to know that we cannot live the Christian life; we need to learn that we cannot do it ourselves. In fact, we need an undo-it-yourself kit; that is, we need to turn our lives over to the Spirit of God, yield to Him, and let Him do for us what we cannot do ourselves.

The Mosaic Law is where many Christians go to try to find Christian living. Now Paul is going to show that the Mosaic Law has no claim on the believer. Actually, the Law condemned man to die; it was a ministration of condemnation (see [2Cor. 3:9](#)). You don't contact the judge who sentenced you to die and ask him how you are going to live!

Shackles Of A Saved Soul (7:1-14)

Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? [[Rom. 7:1](#)].

"Know ye not" is an expression that occurs again and again in the writings of Paul. Putting it into the positive, it is, "Are you so ignorant?" When Paul says, "Know ye not," you may be sure that the brethren did not know.

"I speak to them that know the law." The Mosaic Law had had over a millennium's trial with God's chosen people in a land that was favorable and adaptable to the keeping of the Law -- the Law was not only given to a people but to a land. Yet Israel did not keep the Law. Remember that Stephen in his defense said that they had ". . . received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it" ([Acts 7:53](#)). Peter calls it a yoke "which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear" ([Acts 15:10](#)).

Now Paul will give an illustration that I think is a great one. Unfortunately folk try to draw from it rules for marriage and divorce. But Paul is not talking about marriage and divorce here. Rather, he is illustrating by a well-established and stated law that a wife is bound to a living husband and that death frees her from the status of wife.

For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband [[Rom. 7:2](#)].

A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives, but when the husband dies, she is completely discharged from the law of her husband. In other words, if he is dead, she is no longer married to him.

So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man [[Rom. 7:3](#)].

Some folk insist that divorce and remarriage is not permitted under any circumstances according to this verse. We need to thoroughly understand the background. What would happen under the Mosaic Law if a man or woman were unfaithful in marriage? Suppose a woman is married to a man who is a philanderer, and he is unfaithful to her. What happens? He is stoned to death. When the old boy is lying under a pile of stones, she is free to marry another, of course. In our day we cannot apply the Mosaic Law -- we can't stone to death the unfaithful. And Paul is not giving us instructions on divorce and remarriage here; he will do that elsewhere. The point Paul is making here is that when a woman's husband dies, she is no longer a wife, she is a single woman again. This is, I think, a universal principle among civilized people. There are heathen people who put the wife to death when the husband dies, but civilized folk have never followed that practice.

Paul goes on to amplify the law of husband and wife. He brings into sharp focus her status in the case that her husband is alive and again in the case that the husband is dead.

Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to

him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God [[Rom. 7:4](#)].

In other words: Accordingly, my brethren, you (old Adamic nature) also were done to death as to the Law; the Law was killed to you by means of the body of Christ; that you should be married to another, even to Him who rose from the dead, that we might bear fruit unto God.

The wife represents the believer in Christ. The second husband represents Christ. We are joined to Him. But who is the first husband?

Let's see what some have said. Dr. William Sanday interprets him as the old state before conversion: "The (first) Husband -- the old state before conversion to Christianity." Dr. Stifler concludes that the first husband is Christ crucified. Dr. William R. Newell held that the first husband set forth Adam and our position in him.

Personally, I consider the latter the best interpretation, because all the way through this section, beginning at chapter 5 where there were two headships -- Adam and Christ -- we have seen the first Adam and the last Adam, the first man and the second man. We are joined to Adam through the old Adamic nature. The Law was given to control the old Adamic nature, but it failed through the infirmity of the flesh. The Law actually became a millstone around the neck of the Israelite. It never lifted him up, but it kept him in slavery for fifteen hundred years. Its demands had to be met, but man could not meet them. It was indeed a ministration of condemnation. If the Gentile had to adopt the Law when he became a believer, there was no hope for him either. Paul says that Christ died in His body, we are identified with Christ in His death, and now we are dead to the Law and the Law is dead to us. That first husband is Adam, and we are no longer joined to him. Now we are joined to the living Christ. We died with Him and we have been raised with Him. He is the second husband, the living Christ, who enables us to bear fruit. We know Christ no longer after the flesh; it is the resurrected Christ we are joined to. The Law is not given to the new man in Christ -- old things have passed away and all things have become new (see [2Cor. 5:17](#)). The believer is not under law but under grace -- this is the ipso facto statement of Scripture. Believer, believe it! It is so, for God says it!

Now let me illustrate this with a very ridiculous illustration that I heard when I was a student in seminary down in Georgia. Back in the antebellum days, before the Civil War, there was a plantation owner, a very fine, handsome man married to a beautiful woman, and they lived happily in a lovely home. Then he became sick and died suddenly. It was a great heartbreak to her, for she loved him dearly, and she did a strange and morbid thing. She had his body embalmed, placed in a sitting position in a chair in an air-tight glass case, and situated in the great hallway of her lovely southern home. The minute you opened the door, you were looking at him. Well, her friends realized that this wouldn't do, so they urged her to go away and travel for awhile. So she went north, then traveled abroad for almost two years. During that time she met another man, fell in love with him and married him. On their honeymoon they came to her plantation home. The new bridegroom did as a new bridegroom is supposed to do, he picked her up and carried her over the threshold. When he put her down, he was staring into the face of a man in a glass case. He said to his bride, "Who is that?" Well, she had forgotten about him. She told him that he was her first husband. They both decided it was time to bury him, which was the

proper thing to do. She was married to a new man; the old man was dead. Now I confess that that is a ridiculous story; I sometimes wonder if it really ever happened. Whether or not the story is true, it is true that there are many believers today who have dug up the Law -- in fact, they have never buried the Law. They have the Law sitting in a glass case, and they are trying to live by the Law in the strength of the old Adamic nature! How ridiculous! The believer is joined to the living Christ today, and the Christian's life is to please Him. Oh, how important that is. I can't overemphasize it.

For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death [[Rom. 7:5](#)].

Face this squarely, my friend. Are you able in your own strength to keep the Law? The Law was a straitjacket put on the flesh to control it. The flesh rebelled and chafed under the irksome restraint of the Law. The flesh had no capacity or desire to follow the injunctions of the Law. The flesh broke out of the restraint imposed by law and therefore brought down the irrevocable penalty for breaking the Law, which is death.

But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter [[Rom. 7:6](#)].

"But now we are delivered from the law" means discharged or annulled from the Law. Notice the paradoxes in this section. In [verse 4](#) it was having died, they bear fruit; here in [verse 6](#) they have been discharged, yet they serve. Today we are to serve Him, not on the basis or the motive, "I ought to do it," but now, "I delight to do it because I want to please Christ." The believer is set free, but now in love he gives himself to the Savior as he never could do under the Law. Note this little bit of verse I used to carry in my Bible when I was a student in college and seminary:

I do not work my soul to save; That work my Lord hath done. But I will work like any slave For love of God's dear Son.

We serve Christ because we love Him. Our Lord asked Simon Peter the direct question, "... Lovest thou me? ..." ([John 21:17](#)). That is the question that faces you and me. God's question to the lost world is: "What will you do with My Son who died for you?" However, His question to the believer is: "Lovest thou me?"

The Christian life is Christ living His life through us today. We can't do it ourselves, nor can we do it by the law. There is nothing wrong with the Law -- let's understand that -- the problem is with us.

What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead [[Rom. 7:7-8](#)].

Let me try to bring out the meaning a little more clearly: What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? Away with the thought! On the contrary, I should not have been conscious of

sin, except through law; for I had not known illicit desire (coveting). But sin, getting a start through the commandment, produced in me all manner of illicit desire. For apart from the Law sin is dead.

Paul, you recall, began his argument way back in the sixth chapter of Romans with this expression, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin?" Now again he says, "What shall we say then? Is the Law sin?" In the first part of this chapter Paul seems to be saying that law and sin are on a par. If release from sin means release from law, then are they not the same? Paul clarifies this. He says, "Perish the thought!" Paul will now show that the Law is good; it reveals God's will. The difficulty is not with the Law; the difficulty is with us. The flesh is at fault.

Paul becomes very personal in the remainder of this chapter. Notice that he uses the first person pronouns: I, me and myself; they are used forty-seven times in this section. The experience is the struggle Paul had within himself. He tried to live for God in the power of his new nature. He found it was impossible. The Law revealed to Paul the exceeding sinfulness of sin. The Law was an X-ray of his heart. That is what the Law will do for you if you put it down on your life. The Word of God is called a mirror; it reveals what we are. If you have a spot on your face, the mirror will show it to you, but it can't remove the spot. However, God has a place to remove it:

There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.

The Law reveals the exceeding sinfulness of sin. The Law is not at fault, but the old Adamic nature is the culprit. The admonition of prohibition contained in the Law makes clear the weakness of the flesh. It shows we are sinners.

Here in California a test was made some time ago. A mirror was put in a very prominent public place, and the test was to see if men or women looked at themselves more. I felt it was an unnecessary test; I could have told them that women looked at themselves more. But unfortunately, the test proved otherwise. We all like to see ourselves. We all like to look in a mirror -- except one: the Word of God. We don't like to look in that one because it reveals us as sinners, horrible, lost sinners.

For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died [[Rom. 7:9](#)].

The Law is a ministry of condemnation. The Law can do nothing but condemn us.

And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death [[Rom. 7:10](#)].

Oh, the tragedy of the person who seeks to live by the Law! It does not lead him to life. While it is true that God had said, "This do and thou shalt live" (see [Deut. 8:1](#)), the doing of it was the difficulty. The fault was not in the Law, but in the one who thought the Law would bring life and power. It did neither. It merely revealed the weakness, inability, and the sin of mankind. If there had been a law which could have given life, God would have given it (see [Gal. 3:21](#)). But life and Christian living do not come by the Law.

Let me illustrate this. A car is a very useful thing. But a car in the hands of an incapable driver can be a danger and a menace. In fact, it can be a death-dealing instrument. The fault is not with the car; the fault is with the driver. The problem is man; he is the culprit.

For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me [[Rom. 7:11](#)].

Sin is personified again here and is a tempter. Sin tempts every man outside the Garden of Eden relative to himself and God. In the Garden of Eden Satan made man believe that God could not be trusted and that man was able to become god, apart from God. Sin, like a Pied Piper, leads the children of men into believing that they can keep the Law and that God is not needed. This is the false trail that he has been talking about, which leads to death. It was ordained to life, Paul says, and he found it led him to death. Sin at last will kill, for the Law did bring the knowledge of sin, and man is without excuse. Again, the difficulty is not with the Law, but within man.

Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good [[Rom. 7:12](#)].

The problem is a human problem. Man is the "x" in the equation of life. He is the uncertain one, the one who cannot be trusted.

Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful [[Rom. 7:13](#)].

Is this a strange paradox? Is it a perversion of a good thing? The commandment was totally incapable of communicating life. Man must have recourse to help from the outside, because the commandment intensified the awfulness of sin.

For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin [[Rom. 7:14](#)].

This is Paul's testimony.

"We know" was the general agreement among believers. The Law is spiritual in the sense that it was given by the Holy Spirit and is part of the Word of God. In other words, that is an expression in Scripture. For example, the rock is called spiritual in [1Corinthians 10:4](#), for it was produced by the Holy Spirit. Israel in the wilderness had spiritual meat and spiritual drink in this sense -- that is, the Spirit of God provided it.

"But I am carnal." This means, "I am in the flesh [Greek sarkinos]." It does not mean the meat on the bones of the body. This body of ours is neutral and can be used for that which is either good or bad. It is like the automobile I referred to. Carnality refers to this old human mind and spirit and nature which occupies and uses the flesh so that actually the flesh itself is contaminated with sin. (For example, look upon the face of a baby and then look at the face fifty years later. Sin has written indelible lines even upon the surface of the body.) Flesh is inert and has no capabilities or possibilities toward God. It is dominated by a sinful nature, the ramifications of which reach into the inmost recesses of the body and mind. The frontal lobe of the brain is merely an instrument to devise evil.

The motor neurons are ready to spring into evil excesses. The heart of man is desperately wicked. He wants to do the things that are evil, and the body responds.

Paul describes his pitiful plight as a slave sold to a Simon Legree taskmaster with a whiplash of evil.

Struggle Of A Saved Soul (7:15-25)

For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I [[Rom. 7:15](#)].

Here we have the conflict of two natures, the old nature and the new nature. There are definitely two "I's" in this section. The first "I" is the old nature as he asserts his rights. "For what I would" is what the new nature wants to do. "That do I not" -- the old nature rebels and won't do it. "But what I hate" -- the new nature hates it -- "that do I"; the old nature goes right ahead and does it.

Do you have the experience of this struggle in your Christian life? Do you do something, then hate yourself because you have done it? And you cry out, "God, oh, how I've failed You!" I think every child of God has this experience. Paul is speaking of his own experience in this section. Apparently there were three periods in his life. First he was a proud Pharisee under the Mosaic system, kidding himself by bringing the sacrifices and doing other things which he thought would make him right with God. But the Law was condemning him all the while. Then the second period began when he met Christ on the Damascus Road. This proud young Pharisee turned to Christ as his Savior, but he still felt he could live the Christian life. His new nature said, "I am now going to live for God!" But he failed and was in the arena of struggle and failure for a time. I do not know how long it lasted -- probably it was not long. There came a day when there was victory, but Paul did not win it; Christ did. Paul learned that it was a matter of yielding, presenting himself and letting the Spirit of God live the Christian life through him.

If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good [[Rom. 7:16](#)].

When the old nature breaks the commandment (in this instance it was coveting), then the new nature agrees with the Law that coveting is wrong. Paul was not fighting the Law because he broke it. He was agreeing as a believer that the Law was good.

Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me [[Rom. 7:17](#)].

In other words: It is no longer I (new nature) who am working it out, but sin (the old nature) living in me. You see, Paul still had the old nature.

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not [[Rom. 7:18](#)].

Paul learned two things in this struggle, and they are something that many of us believers need to learn. "In me (that old nature we have been talking about) dwells no good thing." Have you learned that? Have you found there is no good in you? Oh, how many of us Christians feel that we in the flesh can do something that will please God! Many

believers who never find out otherwise become as busy as termites and are having about the same effect in many of our churches. They are busy as bees, but they aren't making any honey! They get on committees, they are chairmen of boards, they try to run the church, and they think they are pleasing God. Although they are busy, they have no vital connection with the person of Christ. His life is not being lived through them. They are attempting to do it in their own strength by the flesh. They haven't learned what Paul learned: "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing."

Let me make it personal. Anything that Vernon McGee does in the flesh, God hates. God won't have it; God can't use it. When it is of the flesh, it is no good. Have you learned that? That is a great lesson. The Lord Jesus said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh . . ." ([John 3:6](#)) (and that is all it will ever be), but "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin . . ." ([1John 3:9](#)). My, how wonderful that is! We are given a new nature, and that new nature will not commit sin. I assure you that the new nature won't commit sin. When I sin, it is the old nature. The new nature won't do it; the new nature just hates sin. That new nature won't let me sleep at night; it says, "Look, you are wrong. You have to make it right!"

Paul found out something else that is very important for us to learn: "for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." He found there is no good in the old nature and there is no power in the new nature. The new nature wants to serve God, but the carnal man is at enmity against God; it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be (see [Rom. 8:7](#)). But the new nature has no power.

I remember when I started out, oh, I was going to live for God! That's when I fell on my face, and I have never fallen harder than I did then. I thought I could do it myself. But I found there was no power in the new nature. And that is the reason that an evangelist can always get response in a meeting. I'm afraid ninety percent of the decisions that are made in our churches today have been made by Christians who have been living in defeat in their Christian lives. What they are really saying is, "I want to live for God. I want to do better." Often an evangelist in a meeting says, "All of you that want to live for God, put up your hand. All of you today that want to come closer to God, put up your hand. Those of you who want to commit your life to God, come forward." The minute an evangelist says that, he's got me. That is what I want to do. That new nature of mine says, "I sure would like to live for God." But there is no power in it. That is what multitudes of believers fail to recognize. There have been folk who have been coming forward for years, and that's all they have been doing -- just coming forward! They never make any progress. Oh, how they need to understand this truth!

For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do [[Rom. 7:19](#)].

Have you experienced this?

Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me [[Rom. 7:20](#)].

It is that old nature, my friend, that is causing us trouble.

I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me [[Rom. 7:21](#)].

When you are attempting to serve God in the Spirit, have you discovered that the old nature is right there to bring evil? Perhaps an evil thought will come into your mind. Every child of God, regardless of his state, must admit that in every act and in every moment evil is present with him. Failure to recognize this will eventually lead to shipwreck in the Christian life.

For I delight in the law of God after the inward man [[Rom. 7:22](#)].

"The inward man" is the new nature.

But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members [[Rom. 7:23](#)].

You see, you don't get rid of the old nature when you are saved. And yet there is no power in your new nature. "I see a different law" is the enmity of the old nature against God. It causes the child of God who is honest to cry out, as Paul cried:

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? [[Rom. 7:24](#)].

This is not an unsaved man who is crying, "O wretched man that I am"; this is a saved man. The word wretched carries with it the note of exhaustion because of the struggle. "Who is going to deliver me?" He is helpless. His shoulders are pinned to the floor -- he has been wrestled down. Like old Jacob, he has been crippled. He is calling for help from the outside.

I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin [[Rom. 7:25](#)].

"I thank God [who gives deliverance] through Jesus Christ our Lord." This is the answer to Paul's SOS. God has provided deliverance. It introduces chapter 8 in which the deliverance is given in detail. Both salvation and sanctification come through Christ; He has provided everything we need.

Run, run and do, the Law commands
But gives me neither feet nor hands.
Better news the Gospel brings,
It bids me fly and gives me wings.

Chapter 8

THEME: The new man; the new creation; the new body; new purpose

This chapter brings us to the conclusion of sanctification. In fact, it presents three great subjects: sanctification, security, and no separation from God. Here it is powerful sanctification in contrast to powerless sanctification. In this chapter we are going to see God's new provision for our sanctification.

While inadequacy has been my feeling all the way through this epistle, especially here I feel totally incapable of dealing with these great truths. This is such a glorious and wonderful epistle that all we can do is merely stand as Moses did at the burning bush with our feet unshod and our head uncovered, not fully realizing or recognizing the glory and wonder of it all.

Chapter 8 is the high-water mark in Romans. This fact is generally conceded by all interpreters of this great epistle. Spencer said, "If Holy Scripture were a ring and the epistle to the Romans its precious stone, chapter eight would be the sparkling point of the jewel." Godet labeled it, "this incomparable chapter." Someone has added, "We enter this chapter with no condemnation, we close with no separation, and in between all things work together for good to those that love God."

My friend, how could you have it any better than that? We find that joy and peace is to be given to the child of God in this life. He is to live for God in the very presence of sin. Sin is not to dictate his life's program. It has already been shown that there is nothing in the justified sinner that can produce this ideal state. We have seen that the new nature has no power and the old nature has no good. Then how is a child of God to live for God? Paul cried out for outside help, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" ([Rom. 7:24](#)). In other words, who is going to enable me to live for God?

Paul concluded chapter 7 by saying, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." Now chapter 8 will give us the *modus operandi*; that is, the means by which the victory is secured.

This chapter introduces us to the work of the Holy Spirit in sanctification. The Holy Spirit is mentioned nineteen times in this chapter. Before chapter 8 there were only two casual references (see [Rom. 5:5](#); [Rom. 7:6](#)). In this epistle we see the work of the Blessed Trinity:

God the Father in creation ([Rom. 1:1](#) -- [Rom. 3:20](#))
God the Son in salvation ([Rom. 3:21](#) -- [Rom. 7:25](#))
God the Holy Spirit in sanctification ([Rom. 8:1-39](#))

Now here in chapter 8 we see the Holy Spirit and real sanctification. A life that is pleasing to God must be lived in the power of the Holy Spirit. As Paul said to the Ephesian believers, "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit" ([Eph. 5:18](#)). Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit in the regenerated life of a believer, delivering the believer from the power of sin -- even in the very presence of sin -- and performing all God's will in the life of the believer.

Godet labels the first eleven verses "The Victory of the Holy Spirit over Sin and Death."

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit [[Rom. 8:1](#)].

"Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" does not really belong in this verse. Apparently some scribe picked it up from [verse 4](#) where it belongs. The literal rendering

is: "Therefore now, not one condemnation." This is the inspired statement that, in spite of the failure that Paul experienced in chapter 7, he did not lose his salvation. There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. However, he wasn't enjoying the Christian life -- he was a failure, and he was a wretched man. God wanted him to have joy in his life. Now how is he to have this? Notice the next verse.

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free
from the law of sin and death [[Rom. 8:2](#)].

This is a very important statement. This little word for occurs seventeen times in this chapter. Because it is the cement that holds the chapter together, it is a word that requires real mental effort. We need to follow the logic of the apostle Paul. One of the great expositors of Romans said that if you do not find Paul logical, you are not following him aright.

"The law of the Spirit" means not only a principle of law, but also the authority which is exercised by the Spirit.

"The Spirit of life" means the Holy Spirit who brings life because He essentially is life. He is the Spirit of life.

"In Christ Jesus" means that the Holy Spirit is in complete union with Christ Jesus. Because the believer shares the life of Christ, He liberates the believers.

"The law of sin and death" is the authority that sin had over our old nature, ending in complete severance of fellowship with God. That new nature could not break the shackles at all. Only the coming of a higher authority and power could accomplish this, namely the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit operates upon the new nature, which is vitally joined to the life of Christ. The man in [Romans 7](#), who was joined to the body of the dead, is now joined to the living Christ also.

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the
flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and
for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk
not after the flesh, but after the Spirit [[Rom. 8:3-4](#)].

We have here the whole crux of the matter. Let me give my translation, which may bring out several things we need to understand. "For the thing impossible for the Law in which it was powerless through the flesh, God, having sent His own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin, and in regard to sin, He condemned the sin in the flesh; in order that the justification (the righteous result) of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to flesh but according to Spirit."

It was impossible for the Law to produce righteousness in man. This is not the fault of the Law. The fault lay in man and the sin in his flesh. The Law was totally incapable of producing any good thing in man. Paul could say, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing" ([Rom. 7:18](#)). And friend, that is Scripture, and that is accurate. Man is totally depraved. That doesn't mean only the man across the street or down in the next block from you, nor does it mean only some person who is living in sin;

it means you and it means me. The Holy Spirit is now able to do the impossible. The Holy Spirit can produce a holy life in the weak and sinful flesh. Let me illustrate this truth by using a very homely incident. Suppose a housewife puts a roast in the oven right after breakfast because she is going to serve it for the noon meal. The telephone rings. It is Mrs. Joe Dokes on the phone. Mrs. Dokes begins with "Have you heard?" Well, the housewife hasn't heard, but she would like to; so she pulls up a chair. (Someone has defined a woman as one who draws up a chair when answering a telephone.) Mrs. Dokes has a lot to tell, and about an hour goes by. Finally our good housewife says, "Oh, Mrs. Dokes, you'll have to excuse me. I smell the roast -- its burning!" She hangs up the phone, rushes to the kitchen, and opens the oven. Then she gets a fork and puts it down in the roast to lift it up, but it won't hold. She can't lift it out. She tries again, closer to the bone, but still it won't hold. So she gets a spatula. She puts the spatula under the roast and lifts it out. You see, what the fork could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, the spatula is able to do. Now, there is nothing wrong with the fork -- it was a good fork. But it couldn't hold the flesh because something was wrong with the flesh -- it was overcooked. The spatula does what the fork could not do.

The Law is like the fork in that it was weak through the flesh. It just won't lift us up; it can't lift us up. But a new principle is introduced: the Holy Spirit. What the Law could not do, the Holy Spirit is able to do. Therefore, you and I are to live the Christian life on this new principle. We are not to try to lift ourselves up by our own bootstraps. We'll never make it that way, my friend. We make resolutions and say, "I'm going to do better" -- all of us have said that. But did we ever do better? Didn't we do the same old things?

God is able to do this new impossible thing by sending His very own Son, His own nature in the likeness of sinful flesh. Christ had the same kind of flesh that we have, apart from sin. Notice how the writer to the Hebrews puts it: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil . . . For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people" ([Heb. 2:14, 16-17](#)). Also he says, "For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" ([Heb. 7:26](#)). Then he says, "Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me" ([Heb. 10:5](#)).

This was God's way of getting at the roots of sin in our bodies, minds, and spirits. He could condemn and execute sinful flesh on the Cross so that it had no more rights in human beings. God was able to deal with sin itself -- Christ was identified with us -- what condescension! Sin has been condemned in these bodies of ours. It has not been removed, in spite of the belief of some very sincere people. These bodies are to be redeemed -- ". . . raised a spiritual body . . ." ([1Cor. 15:44](#)). Today, the Holy Spirit is the Deliverer from sin in the body. A great many people think it would be wonderful if Christ would come and take us out of this world of sin -- and that would be wonderful. I wish He would come right now. However, there is something even more wonderful than that. It is this: He enables you and me to live the Christian life right where we are today in this old world of sin. That is more wonderful. Our Lord Jesus said in His high priestly prayer, "I pray not

that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil" ([John 17:15](#)). Down here is where the victory is.

"That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled" -- this is the passive voice. It means that the Holy Spirit produces a life of obedience which the Law commanded but could not produce. The Holy Spirit furnishes the power; the decision is ours.

The next verse introduces us to a new struggle. It is not for us to do the fighting. Now it is the Holy Spirit versus the flesh.

For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh;
but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit [[Rom. 8:5](#)].

"Do mind the things of the flesh." When I was holding a meeting in Middle Tennessee after I was first ordained, I was invited to dinner in a lovely country home. The housewife had prepared some wonderful fried chicken. When we were already sitting at the table, she went out to call her little boy again. After she'd called him several times, she came in and said, "That young'un won't mind me." And what she meant was, "That young one will not obey me." Paul, you see, sounds like a good Southerner because he uses this word, "they mind the things of the flesh." We have seen that before in the sixth chapter of Romans. My friend, if you live habitually in the flesh and obey the things of the flesh, and the new nature doesn't rebuke you, you must not have a new nature -- because "they that are after the Spirit [mind] the things of the Spirit." A believer has been given a new nature, and now he can yield himself to the new nature. And this is an act of the will. This is the new struggle that's brought to our attention. "The flesh" describes the natural man. The Lord Jesus said, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh" -- it will always be flesh. God has no program to change the flesh. Rather He brings in something new: "and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" ([John 3:6](#)).

A new struggle is brought to our attention. It is no longer the new nature or the believer striving for mastery over sin in the body; it is the Holy Spirit striving against the old nature. The little boy coming home from school was being beaten up by a big bully. He was on the bottom, and the big bully was pounding him very heavily. Then he looked up from his defeated position on the bottom, and he saw his big brother coming. The big brother took care of the bully while the little fellow crawled up on a stump and rubbed his bruises. The believer has the Holy Spirit to deal with the flesh, that big bully. I learned a long time ago that I can't overcome it. So I have to turn it over to somebody who can. The Holy Spirit indwells believers. He wants to do that for us, and He can!

"They that are after the flesh" describes the natural man. Paul paints his picture in [Ephesians 2:1-3](#). "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins: wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." This was the condition of all of us until we were saved.

And the "flesh" includes the mind. "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled" ([Col. 1:21](#)). It includes the total personality which is completely alienated from God.

The natural man strives and even sets his heart upon the things of the flesh. Here is his diet: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" ([Gal. 5:19-21](#)). It is an ugly brood!

In Colossians Paul says: "But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds" ([Col. 3:8-9](#)). The Lord Jesus said: "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" ([Matt. 15:19](#)).

It is humiliating but true that the child of God retains this old Adamic nature. It means defeat and death to live by the flesh. No child of God can be happy in living for the things of the flesh. The prodigal son may get into the pigpen, but he will never be content to stay there. He is bound to say, "I will arise and go to my father."

"They that are after the Spirit" are born again, regenerated and indwelt by the Spirit of God. They love the things of Christ. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" ([Col. 3:1-2](#)). And Paul says, "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering" ([Col. 3:12](#)). These are just some of the things for which the child of God longs. You and I cannot do these things by effort. It is only as we let the Spirit of God work in our lives that they will appear.

Here is another great principle.

[For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace \[Rom. 8:6\].](#)

"For to be carnally minded" means that you are separated from fellowship with God and that flesh is death here and now. The Spirit who indwells the believer brings life and peace. When we sin, we are to come to Him in confession and let Him wash us. This restores us to fellowship.

The "life" He offers speaks of full satisfaction and the exercise of one's total abilities. Oh, to live life at its fullest and best! Many people think they are really living today, but it is a shoddy substitute for the life God wants to provide.

"Peace" means the experience of tranquility and well-being regarding the present and future. Oh, my beloved, how you and I need to get into that territory!

There is one thing for sure: if you are living in the flesh, and you are a child of God, you are not having fellowship with God. You can't. The Lord Jesus in the Upper Room said to

Simon Peter, ". . . If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me" ([John 13:8](#)). Now, my friend, He meant that. He will not fellowship with you or with me if we are committing sin and are continuing to live in the flesh. "Well," somebody says, "what are we to do?" Do what Simon Peter had to do -- he stuck out his feet and let the Lord wash them. And you and I need to go to Him in confession. [1John 1:9](#) tells us, "If we confess our sins." Who is "we"? We Christians. "He is faithful and just . . ." when He does it, because it will take the blood of Christ, my friend. You and I do not know how wicked the old nature is. And we need to go to Him for cleansing.

The English poet, John Donne, using the mythological story of the labors of Hercules -- where that strongman of the ancient world was confronted with the task of cleaning out the Augean stables -- illustrates this important truth. Though Hercules was able to perform the task, Donne shows that man cannot clean the much greater filth of the human heart. He writes:

Lord I confess that Thou alone are able To purify this Augean stable. Be
the seas water, and all the land soap Yet if Thy blood not wash me --
there's no hope.

The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, keeps on cleansing us from all sin (see [1John 1:7](#)). This old nature is totally depraved. God has no plan to redeem it. He gives us a new nature. And you and I can't live for God in that old nature. If you continue to live in that old nature, you must not be a child of God. Somebody says, "Then if a child of God sins, what's the difference between him and the lost man?" The difference is simply this: when the lost man goes out at night and paints the town red, he comes back and says, "I'll get a bigger brush and a bigger bucket of paint next time; wow, I want to live it up!" While the child of God, if he does a thing like that, will cry out to God, "Oh, God, I hate myself for what I've done!" And this idea today that you can somehow train your old nature, and live in it, is false. That's the thing that leads to legalism. Legalists -- well, I call them Priscilla Goodbodies and Goody-goody-gumdrops, those sweet lovely people who are trying to control the flesh -- they are so pious! I want to tell you, they are the worst gossips you have ever met.

Dr. Newell has put down some very interesting statements which I would like to pass on to you. "To hope to do better is to fail to see yourself in Christ only." You say, "I hope to do better." You know you're not. You need to see yourself in Christ today and realize that only the Spirit of God moving through you can accomplish this. And then Newell says again, "To be disappointed with yourself means you believed in yourself." Somebody says, "Oh, I'm so disappointed in myself." Well, you had better be disappointed in yourself. You know no good thing is going to come out of the flesh, friend. Stop believing in yourself, and believe that the Spirit of God today can enable you through the new nature to live for God. Also Newell says, "To be discouraged is unbelief." Somebody says, "Oh, I'm so discouraged." My friend, that means you don't believe God. God has a purpose and a plan, a blessing for you. And you need to lay hold of it. Here is another statement: "To be proud is to be blind." We have no standing before God in ourselves. Oh, my friend, see yourself as God sees you. Here is the final gem: "The lack of divine blessing comes from unbelief, not a failure of devotion." I am so sick and weary of these super-duper pious, "dedicated" Christians who talk about their devotion. My

friend, the lack of divine blessing comes because we do not believe God. It is not because of a lack of devotion. Oh, to believe God today! Now, real devotion arises not from man's will to show it, but from the discovery that blessing has been received from God while we were yet unworthy and undevoted. Nothing I get from God has come through my devotion. I haven't anything to offer Him. It comes because of His marvelous grace. And I've seen these folk who preach "devotion" troop down to dedicate their lives in services. I got so sick and tired of seeing that same crowd come down -- and you could not trust them, my friend. They were liars. They were dishonest. They were gossips, and they would crucify you. May I say to you, you do not need to dedicate yourself. What you need today is to believe God can do something and you can't do anything. Now, somebody says, "That's pretty strong." I hope that it is. I intend for it to be that way, because Paul is making it very clear here. The carnal mind is enmity against God.

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God [[Rom. 8:7-8](#)].

This verse reveals how hopelessly incorrigible and utterly destitute the flesh really is. It is a spiritual anarchist. This demolishes any theory that there is a divine spark in man and that somehow he has a secret bent toward God. The truth is that man is the enemy of God. He is not only dead in trespasses and sins but active in rebellion against God. Man will even become religious in order to stay away from the living and true God and the person of Jesus Christ. Man in his natural condition, if taken to heaven, would start a revolution, and he would have a protest meeting going on before the sun went down! Jacob, in his natural condition, engaged in a wrestling match. He did not seek it, but he fought back when God wrestled with him. It wasn't until he yielded that he won, my friend.

Anything that the flesh produces is not acceptable to God. The so-called good work, the civilization, the culture, and man's vaunted progress are all a stench in the nostrils of God. The religious works of church people done in the lukewarmness of the flesh make Christ sick to His stomach (see [Rev. 3:15-16](#)).

I wonder if we are willing to accept God's estimation of our human boasting. This is a terrible picture of man; but it is accurate. Yet there is deliverance in the Spirit of God. Are you willing, my friend, to turn it over to the Holy Spirit and quit trusting that weak, sinful nature that you have? That is the question.

But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his [[Rom. 8:9](#)].

This first "if" is not casting a doubt over the Roman believers' salvation. They are saved. Let me give you a literal translation: "But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit since the Spirit of God really dwells in you." That is the real test. But if anyone has "not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." The true mark of a born-again believer and a genuine Christian is that he is indwelt by the Spirit of God. Even Paul could say to the carnal Corinthians: "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" ([1Cor. 6:19](#)). When Paul went

to Ephesus the first time, he missed something; he missed the distinguishing mark of the believer. So he asked, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" They didn't even know what he was talking about. So he asked them, ". . . Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism" ([Acts 19:3](#)). Well, John's baptism was unto repentance; it was not to faith in Jesus Christ. So he preached Christ to them. Then they received Him and were baptized in His name (see [Acts 19:5](#)). A believer is a new creation. Do you love Him? Do you want to serve Him? Are these things uppermost in your mind and heart? Or are you in rebellion against God?

And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness [[Rom. 8:10](#)].

In other words: Now if Christ be in you, the body indeed is dead on account of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. He is saying here that you and I are in Christ, and since we are in Him, when He died, we died. And we are to reckon on this, as we have already been told. Also we are to yield, that is, present our bodies to Him. Don't say you can't do this -- that is not the language of a believer. Paul could say, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" ([Gal. 2:20](#)).

If you today are not conscious of the presence of the Spirit of God in your life and if you do not have a desire to serve God, then it would be well to do as Paul suggests, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" ([2Cor. 13:5](#)). The Lord wants us to know that we are in Christ. "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" ([Col. 1:27](#)).

If you are not sure that Christ is in you, He extends this invitation: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" ([Rev. 3:20](#)). Is your door open? Has He come into you? My friend, the body has been put in the place of death. This is something the child of God should reckon on. And he should turn over his life to the Spirit of God, saying very definitely, "I cannot do it, Lord, but You can do it through me."

But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you [[Rom. 8:11](#)].

These bodies that you and I have will be put in the grave one of these days, if the Lord tarries. However, the indwelling Holy Spirit is our assurance that our bodies will be raised from the dead ([2Cor. 5:1-4](#)). Because Christ was raised from the dead, we shall be raised from the dead. The Holy Spirit will deliver us from the "body of his death" -- this old nature.

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh [[Rom. 8:12](#)].

In other words, we are not to live according to the flesh. God created man body, mind, and spirit. When man sinned, his spirit died to God. Remember that God warned, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" ([Gen. 2:17](#)). After Adam ate of the fruit, he lived several hundred years -- physically; but spiritually he died immediately. Man was turned upside down. The body, the old nature, the flesh became dominant. Today man is dead spiritually. Regeneration means that you are turned right side up, that you are born again spiritually, and that you have a nature which wants to serve God.

Oh, my friend, to stay close to Christ is the important thing. You can be active in Christian work, as active as a termite, yet Christ can be in outer space as far as you are concerned. The natural man says he owes it to his flesh to satisfy it. He may rationalize his dishonesty by saying, "A man has to eat." A movie star has said, "I live for sex, and I have to have my needs met." We hear this today on every hand. Satisfying the old nature has plunged our nation into the grossest immorality! But God says that we as believers are not debtors to the flesh. My friend, the flesh -- and we all have it -- is a low-down, dirty rascal. And we don't owe it anything.

For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live [[Rom. 8:13](#)].

"For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die" -- die to God. That is, you have no fellowship with Him. I am not talking about a theory; if you are a child of God, you know this from experience. If you are a child of God and you have unconfessed sin in your life, do you want to go to church? Do you want to read your Bible? Do you want to pray? Of course you don't. You are separated from God.

"But if ye through the Spirit" -- you can't do it yourself -- "do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." Let's be practical now. What is your problem today? Liquor? Drugs? Sex? You may say, "I don't have those problems!" Then how about your thought-life? How about your tongue? Do you gossip? Do you tell the truth? Whatever your problem is, why don't you confess it to God, then turn it over to the Holy Spirit? My friend, if you deal with it in reality, you won't need to crawl up on the psychiatrist's couch. He won't help you. He can shift your guilt complex to another area, but he can't get rid of it. Only Christ can remove it; He is in that business. He says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will rest you" so that you will know what it is to have sins forgiven (see [Matt. 11:28](#)).

The New Man (8:14-17)

We come now to a new section concerning the new nature of man.

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God [[Rom. 8:14](#)].

That makes sense, doesn't it? God does not drive His sheep; He leads them. When our Lord told of the safety and security of the sheep, He made it clear that they were not forced into the will of His hand and that of the Father. He said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them [and I drive them out! Oh, no] and they follow me" ([John 10:27](#)). They

are the ones who are safe and secure; they follow Him. They are led by the Spirit of God. They hear His voice because they have a new nature, and they follow Him.

I have been preaching the Word of God for a long time. I have found that those who are His sheep will hear His voice. The others -- they hated me and wanted to get rid of me. Why? They were not His sheep. The Lord Jesus said, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you" ([John 15:18](#)). A young pastor came to me and said, "I'm having all kinds of trouble!" I asked, "Who is giving you trouble?" He said, "My church officers and my Sunday school teachers." So I asked him what he had been doing. He said, "Well, I've been preaching the Bible, following your Thru the Bible method." I said to him, "Well, thank God. You will find that a lot of your folk are not really His sheep." Friend, His sheep will follow Him -- they have to because they are His, you see. That's what Paul is saying here.

For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father [[Rom. 8:15](#)].

"Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear" -- there is not the spirit of fear within you, wondering about your spiritual condition, unhappy, and despondent. Instead, you are filled with joy because you are His child. And the Spirit of God wells up within you, saying, "Abba, Father."

The word Abba is an untranslated Aramaic word. The translators of the first English Bibles, who had great reverence for the Word of God, who believed it was indeed the Word of God, would not translate it. Abba is a very personal word that could be translated "My Daddy." We don't use this word in reference to God because of the danger of becoming overly familiar with Him. But it expresses a heartcry, especially in times of trouble.

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God [[Rom. 8:16](#)].

I found this true the first time I went to the hospital for cancer surgery. I turned my face to the wall, like old Hezekiah did, and said, "Lord, I've been in this hospital many times. I've patted the hands of folk and had prayer with them, and told them, 'Oh, you trust the Lord; He will see you through.' Lord, I have told them that, but this is the first time I've been in here. Now I want to know whether it is true or not. I want You to make it real to me. If You are my Father, I want to know it. And, my friend, He made it real. At a time like that the Spirit of God cries out, "Abba, Father" -- it just wells up within you. How sweet it is to trust Him, turn yourself over to Him.

And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together [[Rom. 8:17](#)].

"If so be" assures the fact that the child of God will suffer with Him. I believe it could be translated "since we suffer with Him." I don't think the "if" is as important as some folk make it out to be.

My friend, what are you enduring for Him today? Whatever it is, Paul makes it clear that it is just a light thing we are going through now. But there is a weighty thing, an "eternal weight of glory" that is coming someday. In eternity we will wish that we had suffered a little more for Him, because that is the way He schools and trains us. "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" ([Heb. 12:6](#)).

The New Creation (8:18-22)

This brings us to a new division in this eighth chapter of Romans.

Not only the bodies of believers are to be redeemed, but we're going to find out that this entire physical universe, this earth on which you and I live, is to be redeemed. That is the purpose of God. In fact we're trading in this old earth for a new earth, a new model, brand new, wherein there will be no sin. No curse of sin will ever come upon it again. That is something that is quite wonderful. Someone said to me not long ago, "I believe that healing is in the Atonement." I think I shocked the person when I said, "I believe that too. Not only is healing in the Atonement, but a new body is in the Atonement, and a new world is in the atonement of Christ. But we don't have it yet." The political parties and the United Nations have been trying to bring in a new world for years, but we certainly do not have these yet. But Christ is going to bring it in someday through His redemption. And then I'm going to get a new body. I'm looking forward to that. This one I've got is wearing out, and I want to trade it in for a new one. And that's coming. And healing -- I'll grant that it is in the Atonement, but I don't have all of that yet. I still have cancer.

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us [[Rom. 8:18](#)].

"I reckon" means that Paul calculates, counts upon, both the debit and credit side of the ledger of life.

"The sufferings of this present time" are the common lot of all believers. This generation, which is enjoying more creature comforts than any other in history, frowns upon this statement, but even present-day Christians cannot escape suffering.

For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God [[Rom. 8:19](#)].

Let me give my translation of this verse: For the creation, watching with outstretched head (head erect), is waiting (sighing) for the revelation of the sons of God.

The world is not waiting for the sunrise of evolution's pipe dream. The pipe dream of evolution will never come true. However, creation is waiting "for the manifestation of the sons of God." Creation is like a veiled statue today. When the sons of God have removed the outward covering of this flesh, creation also will be unveiled. What a glorious day that will be!

For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope [[Rom. 8:20](#)].

"For the creation was subjected to vanity" -- vanity means "failure, decay, something that is perishable."

"Not willingly" means not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it on the basis of hope. King Solomon, who was quite a pessimist, by the way, wrote: "All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again" ([Eccl. 1:7](#)). There is a weary round of repetition. The rivers run into the sea, and the Lord has quite a hydraulic pump that pumps the water right out of the ocean, and with His good transportation system, the wind moves the clouds across the dry land, and here comes the rain again. It fills the rivers, and the rivers run into the sea. There is a monotony about nature; you see it on every hand. Nature is waiting for the promised manifestation, the unveiling.

"Creation was subjected to vanity" because God made it that way. The curse of sin came upon man in Adam's disobedience, but the physical world also came under the curse. Remember that God said to Adam, "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread . . ." ([Gen. 3:18-19](#)). I enjoy going out to the Hawaiian Islands; I know of no place quite as delightful. Yet on a golf course in that "paradise" I found -- of all things -- thorns! I knocked a ball out in the rough there, out in the lava, and I have never seen as many thorns as were there. I have a pair of shoes that have thorns in them to this good day -- I can't get them all out. Even in that paradise there are thorns. There is a curse on creation.

Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God [[Rom. 8:21](#)].

Man has a dying body. As someone has said, "The moment He gives us life, He begins to take it away from us." And there is death and decay yonder in nature. Go out in the beautiful forest, and there you see a tree lying dead, corrupt, rotting. That's nature. And you catch the stench of the decaying bodies of dead animals.

For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now [[Rom. 8:22](#)].

Browning in his Pippa Passes writes:

God's in His Heaven -- All's right with the world.

The Christian knows that that is not true. God is in His heaven all right, but all is not right with the world. The Word of God is more realistic: "How do the beasts groan! the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate" ([Joel 1:18](#)).

Some have called our attention to the fact that nature sings in a minor key. The wind blowing through the pine trees on a mountainside and the breaking of the surf on some lonely shore -- both emit the same sob. The music of trees has been recorded, and it is doleful. The startled cry of some frightened animal or bird pierces the night air and chills the blood. Surely nature bears audible testimony to the accuracy of Scripture. Godet quotes Schelling in this connection, "Nature, with its melancholy chorus, resembles a bride who, at the very moment when she is fully attired for the marriage, saw the bridegroom die. She still stands with her fresh crown and in her bridal dress but her eyes are full of tears."

It is accurate to say that "nature is groaning."

The New Body (8:23-27)

And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body [[Rom. 8:23](#)].

Not only does nature groan, but the believer is in harmony with nature. This verse is devastating to those who propose the theory that the mark of a Christian is a perennially smiling face. They contend that a Christian should be a cross between a Cheshire cat and a house-to-house salesman. A Christian should grin -- at all times. Smile your troubles away is good for Rotary, but it is not the Christian method.

We groan within these bodies. Some years ago when I began to move into middle age, I would come down the steps in the morning groaning because my knees were hurting. My wife told me I ought not to groan! I told her it is scriptural to groan. Paul says, "For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven" ([2Cor. 5:2](#)). Also the psalmist wrote, "I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears" ([Ps. 6:6](#)). Our Lord Jesus did some weeping also. Although I believe He was a joyful person, there were times when He wept. In these bodies we groan.

For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? [[Rom. 8:24](#)].

"We are saved by hope" speaks of the work of Christ for us on the Cross and our faith in Him. But that is not all. We have a redeemed body coming up in the future.

But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it [[Rom. 8:25](#)].

You see, faith, hope, and love are the vital parts of the believer's life. There would be no hope if all were realized. Someday hope will pass away in realization. In fact, both faith and hope will pass away in the glory which shall be revealed in us. Only love abides.

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered [[Rom. 8:26](#)].

Years ago when the late Dr. A. C. Gaebelein was speaking, a very enthusiastic member of the congregation kept interrupting with loud amens. That annoyed Dr. Gaebelein. Finally, he told him, "Brother, the Scripture says that the Spirit maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered -- so don't you utter them if it's the Spirit of God." We didn't even know how we ought to pray; but the Spirit of God will make intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered.

Have you gone to God sometimes in prayer when you actually did not know what to pray for? All you could do was just go to Him and say, "Father." You could not ask anything

because you didn't know what to ask for. At times like this the Spirit "helpeth our infirmities." How wonderful that is!

And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God [[Rom. 8:27](#)].

Now, if I go to God in prayer and say, "Look, Lord, I want You to do it this way," that's the way I usually do it, and I may not get the answer the way I prayed. But it's wonderful sometimes to go to the Lord and say, "Lord, I don't know what to ask for. I don't know what to say. But I'm coming to You as Your child. And I want Your will done." And the Spirit of God then will make intercession for us according to the will of God. My, again, how wonderful that is!

New Purpose (8:28-39)

We come now to the new purpose of God. If Romans is the greatest book of the Bible, and chapter 8 is the high-water mark, then [verse 28](#) is the pinnacle. God's purpose guarantees the salvation of sinners, and the next three verses give the "ascending process of salvation," as William Sanday calls it.

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose [[Rom. 8:28](#)].

I have translated it this way: But we know (with divine knowledge) that for those who love God, all things are working together for good, even to them who are called-ones according to His purpose.

The late Dr. Reuben A. Torrey (I had the privilege of being pastor for twenty-one years of the church that he founded) was a great man of God, greatly abused and misunderstood. He knew the meaning of this verse, and he called it a soft pillow for a tired heart. Many of us have pillowed our heads on [Romans 8:28](#). We know the whole creation is groaning, but we also know something else: all things are working together for good -- even the groanings.

"We know" is used five times in Romans, and "know" is used thirteen times. It refers to that which is the common knowledge of the Christian, that is, that which the Holy Spirit makes real. "Knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth" (see [1Cor. 8:1](#)), and this is the knowledge that only the Spirit of God can make real to our hearts. Charles Spurgeon used to say, "I do not need anyone to tell me how honey tastes; I know." And I can say, my friend, that I know God loves me. I don't need to argue that point; I know it.

"For those who love God" is the fraternity pin of the believer. "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision [that is, there is no badge]; but faith which worketh by love" ([Gal. 5:6](#)). Love is the mark. The apostle John put it like this: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation [the mercy seat] for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the

Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him" ([1John 4:10-16](#)). My friend, you are going to have trouble believing that God loves you, and you will have difficulty loving God, if you are hating other Christians. "We love him, because first loved us" ([1John 4:19](#)). And the apostle Peter said: "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" ([1Pet. 1:8](#)). The thing that will bring joy and brightness into your life is the sincere love of God.

"All things" -- good and bad; bright and dark; sweet and bitter; easy and hard; happy and sad; prosperity and poverty; health and sickness; calm and storm; comfort and suffering; life and death.

"Are working together for good" is causative and means that God is working all things -- there are no accidents. You remember that Joseph could look back over his life, a life that had been filled with vicissitudes, disappointments, and sufferings, yet he could say to his brethren -- who were responsible for his misfortune -- ". . . ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good . . ." ([Gen. 50:20](#)). And I am confident that we as children of God will be able to look back over our lives someday, and say, "All of this worked out for good." Job could say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him . . ." ([Job 13:15](#)). That is the kind of faith in God we need, friend. We know that He is going to make things work out for good because He's the One who is motivating it. He's the One who is energizing it.

However, we often cry out, as Jeremiah did, "Why did you let me see trouble?" (see [Jer. 11:14](#)). It was during the San Francisco earthquake many years ago that a saint of God walked out into the scene of destruction and debris and actually smiled. A friend asked her, "How can you smile at a time like this?" Her reply was, "I rejoice that I have a God who can shake the world!" How wonderful to be able to face life -- and death -- unafraid. I think of Paul who could face the future without flinching. He said to his friends, ". . . What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" ([Acts 21:13](#)). Many of us would like to come to that place of total commitment to Him.

Now notice that all things are working together for good for them "who are the called" ones, and it is "according to his purpose." This is something that is hard for a great many people to swallow. "The called" are those who not only have received an invitation, they have accepted it. And they were born from above. They know experientially the love of God. Paul describes three groups of people, and I think they are the three groups that are in the world today: "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness: but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" ([1Cor. 1:23-24](#)). (1) The Jews trusted in religion, rite and ritual. To them the Cross was a stumblingblock. (2) The Greeks (the Gentiles) trusted in philosophy and human wisdom. To them the Cross was foolishness. (3) "The called" were a group out of both Jews and Greeks who were chosen not because of their religion or wisdom. God called them. To them the Cross was the dynamite of God unto salvation. "The called" heard God's call. That is important.

Let me go back to my illustration of the turtles. Suppose you go down to a swamp, and there are ten turtles. You say to the turtles, "I'd like to teach you to fly." Nine of them say, "We're not interested. We like it down here; we feel comfortable in this environment." One turtle says, "Yes, I'd like to fly." That is the one which is called, and that is the one which is taught to fly. Now that doesn't have anything in the world to do with the other turtles. They are turtles because they are turtles. My friend, the lost are lost because they want it that way. There is not a person on top side of this world that is being forced to be lost. They are lost because they have chosen to be lost.

A boy down in my southland years ago wanted to join a church. So the deacons were examining him. They asked, "How did you get saved?" His answer was, "God did His part, and I did my part." They thought there was something wrong with his doctrine, so they questioned further. "What was God's part and what was your part?" His explanation was a good one. He said, "God's part was the saving, and my part was the sinning. I done run from Him as fast as my sinful heart and rebellious legs could take me. He done took out after me till he run me down." My friend, that is the way I got saved also.

This does not destroy or disturb the fact that "whosoever will may come" and "whosoever believeth." Henry Ward Beecher quaintly put it, "The elect are the whosoever wills and the non-elect are the whosoever won'ts." And it is all according to His purpose. And, my friend, if you have not yet got your mind reconciled to God's purpose and to God's will, it is time you are doing that, because this is His universe. He made it. I don't know why He made a round earth instead of a square one -- He didn't ask me how I wanted it -- He made it round because He wanted it round. My friend, His purpose is going to be carried out, and He has the wisdom and the power to carry it out. Whatever God does is right. Don't you criticize God and say He has no right to save whoever wants to be saved. He has the right to do it. He is just and He is loving, and anything my God does is right.

There was a great theologian in the past by the name of Simeon. In his sermons on [Romans 8](#) he said there were three reasons why he preached on the doctrine of election: It laid the axe at the root of pride, presumption, and despair. I like that. My friend, there is no place for human pride in the doctrine of election. It is God's work, His wisdom, and His purpose that is being carried out. The will of God comes down out of eternity past like a great steamroller. Don't think you can stop it. In fact, you had better get on and ride.

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified [[Rom. 8:29-30](#)].

"For" refers back to [verse 28](#) to remind us that he is not talking about anybody being elected to be lost, but he is speaking of "the called," the predestined ones. Predestination never has any reference to the lost. You will never find it used in connection with them. If you ever hear someone talk about being predestined to be lost, you know he is not being scriptural.

Predestination means that, when God saves you, He is going to see you through. Whom He foreknew, He predestinated, and whom He predestinated, He called, and whom He called, He justified, and whom He justified, He glorified. In other words, this amazing section is on sanctification -- yet, Paul does not even mention being sanctified. Why? Because sanctification is the work of God in the heart and life of the believer. This is God's eternal purpose. It just simply means this: When the Lord -- who is the Great Shepherd of the Sheep, the Good Shepherd of the Sheep, and Chief Shepherd of the Sheep -- starts out with one hundred sheep, He's going to come home with one hundred sheep; He will not lose one of them. You may remember that our Lord gave a parable about this, recorded in [Luke 15](#). There was a shepherd, a good shepherd, who represents the Lord Jesus. One little old sheep got lost, got away. You would think He might say, "Well, let him go. We've got ninety-nine of them safe in the fold. That's a good percentage." Anyone raising sheep knows that if you get to market with a little over fifty percent of those that are born, you're doing well. But this is an unusual shepherd. He is not satisfied with ninety-nine. If He justifies one hundred sheep, He's going to glorify one hundred sheep. I'll make this rather personal. Someday He will be counting them in -- "One, two, three, four, five . . . ninety-seven, ninety-eight, ninety-nine -- where in the world is Vernon McGee? Well, it looks like he didn't make it. We'll let him go because a great many people didn't think he was going to make it anyway." My friend, thank God He won't let him go. That Shepherd is going after him. The doctrine of election means that the Lord will be coming home with one hundred sheep! This is not a frightful doctrine; it is a wonderful doctrine. It means that Vernon McGee's going to be there; and it means you are going to be there, my friend, if you have trusted Christ. This is a most comforting doctrine in these uncertain days in which we live.

What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? [\[Rom. 8:31\]](#).

"What shall we then say to these things?" My answer is, "What can I say? This is so wonderful I have nothing to add!"

"Who can be against us?" God is on our side. Nobody will be able to bring a charge against us in His presence.

He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? [\[Rom. 8:32\]](#).

How wonderful that is! He did not spare His Son. He spared Abraham's son, but not His own. Since He gave His Son to die for us, He will give us all things that we need. Somebody may say, "But I may not be able to hold out." He is going to do that for you -- He will hold you. His sheep are safe, my friend. It is not because they are smart sheep. A rancher in San Angelo, Texas, who raises sheep, told me, "Sheep are stupid!" Also they are defenseless. They don't have sharp claws or fangs to protect themselves. They can't even run very fast. They are little old helpless animals. If a little old sheep stands up and sings, "Safe am I," is that sheep safe? Yes. Smart sheep? No, stupid. That little sheep is safe because he has a wonderful Shepherd.

"How shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Dwight L. Moody illustrated it somewhat like this: Suppose I go into the finest jewelry store in the land, and they bring out the loveliest diamond, and the owner says, "It's yours!" And I say, "You don't mean that you are giving me this valuable diamond!" He says, "Yes. I am giving it to you." If he gave it to me, do you think I would hesitate asking him for a piece of brown wrapping paper to wrap it up and take it home with me? My friend, since God gave his Son to die for you, don't you know that He is going to give you everything that is necessary in this life and in the life to come?

Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.

Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us [[Rom. 8:33-34](#)].

God's elect are justified sinners. God has placed His throne behind them. Who is going to condemn them? Nobody can condemn them. Why? "It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again."

Christ has removed all condemnation, and the believer is secure because of the fourfold work of Christ: (1) Christ died for us -- He was delivered for our offenses; (2) Christ was raised from the dead, raised for our justification; (3) He is on the right hand of God. He is up there right now, my friend. He is the living Christ. Do you need Him? Why don't you appeal to Him? (4) He maketh intercession for us. Did you pray for yourself this morning? You should have. But if you missed praying, He didn't. He prayed for you. How wonderful! This fourfold work of Christ is the reason that nobody can lay anything to the charge of God's elect.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? [[Rom. 8:35](#)].

He mentions everything imaginable here.

Is it possible that "tribulation" or trouble can separate us? No, my friend, because He won't let it. "Distress or anguish?" Oh, you may think God has let you down, but He hasn't. "Persecution" -- and this means legal persecution. It means there are those who will carry on a campaign against you. But that will not separate you from the love of Christ. "Or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" By the way, this is a brief biography of Paul's life. He knows from experience that these will not separate you from Christ's love.

As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter [[Rom. 8:36](#)].

This is a quotation from [Psalm 44:22](#): ". . . yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter." This is a frightful picture of the saints in this day of grace. I believe with all my heart that this is the attitude of a satanic system toward the child of God even in this hour. Also the history of the church reveals this. My friend, if you stand for God today, it will cost you something.

My first job, as a kid about fifteen years old, was in an abattoir, a slaughterhouse. I worked right next to the man who took a sharp knife and cut the sheep's throat. To see animals slaughtered by the hundreds was a frightful spectacle. I got so sick I had to go outside and sit in the fresh air.

And, friend, it is sickening to see what is happening to some of the saints of God in our day. But even this will not separate us from the love of God.

Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us [[Rom. 8:37](#)].

How can a sheep for the slaughter be more than a conqueror? This is another wonderful paradox of the Christian faith. What does it mean to be more than a conqueror? It means to have assistance from another who gets the victory for us, who never lets us be defeated. The victory belongs to Christ; not to us. The victorious life is not our life. It is His life.

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord [[Rom. 8:38-39](#)].

"For I am persuaded" means that he knows.

"Death" cannot separate us -- in fact, it will take us into His presence. The response of many of the early Christian martyrs when they were threatened with death was, "Thank you, you will transport me right into the presence of my Savior." You can't hurt people like that.

"Life" -- often it is more difficult to face life than to face death. But life's temptations, failures, disappointments, uncertainties, and sufferings will not separate us from the love of God that is in Christ our Lord.

"Angels" -- and I think he means fallen angels -- "principalities and powers" are spiritual enemies of the believer (see [Eph. 6:12](#)).

"Things present" means present circumstances.

"Things to come" refers to the future.

"Nor height, nor depth" may refer to the space age in which we live.

"Any other created thing" would include anything else you want to mention. Absolutely nothing can separate us from the love of God which is centered in Christ.

My friend, salvation is a love story. We love Him because He first loved us. Nothing can separate us from that. We entered this chapter with no condemnation; we conclude it with no separation; and in between all things work together for good. Can you improve on this, friend? This is wonderful!

Chapter 9

THEME: Israel defined; Israel identified; the choice of Israel is in the sovereign purpose of God; the choice of Gentiles in the scriptural prophecies

We now have come to the second major division of this epistle. Romans chapters 1 -- 8 is doctrinal. Romans chapters 9 -- 11 is dispensational. Romans chapters 12 -- 16 is duty. The first eight chapters of Romans emphasize faith. Chapters 9 -- 11 emphasize hope. Chapters 12 -- 16 emphasize love. There is another way to view Romans: The first section deals with salvation; the second section with segregation; and the last section with service.

Paul has concluded the first eight chapters of Romans, and he has put salvation on a broad basis, because the entire human race is lost. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" ([Rom. 3:23](#)). God has made salvation available to everyone on one basis alone -- faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul is now ready to discuss the second major division.

Some have attempted to dismiss this section by labeling it an appendix. Others minimize its importance by terming it a parenthesis and not actually pertinent. However, it is not only pertinent, it is vital to the logic and doctrine of the epistle.

There is a sense in which chapters 8 and 12 can be joined together as two boxcars. But Paul was not making up a freight train when he wrote Romans. Romans is not a freight train but a flowing stream. Chapters 9 -- 11 can no more be removed than you can take out the middle section of the Mississippi River without causing havoc. Griffith Thomas writes, "The chapters 9-10-11 are an integral part of the epistle and are essential to its true interpretation."

There are certain grand particulars which reveal the significance of this section. They are: The psychological factor; the historical factor; the doctrinal factor.

The psychological factor has to do with the personal experience of the apostle Paul. It is not entirely accurate to state that Romans comes from the head of the apostle and Galatians comes from his heart. The heart of Paul is laid bare in the opening of chapter 9 -- and in fact, throughout this section. There is a great gap between chapter 8 and chapter 9. Chapter 8 closes on the high plane of triumph and joy in the prospect of no separation from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Chapter 9 opens on the low plane of despair and sorrow. Obviously a change of subject matter brought about this heartbreak in the apostle. This we shall observe when we consider the text.

The historical factor takes into account the unique position and problem in Paul's day. Modern interpretation has largely failed to take into consideration this factor. The present-day church is for the most part Gentile, and the Jewish background has been all but forgotten. Men assume that the Old Testament promises are merged and dissolved into the church. The arbitrary assumption is that the church is heir to the prophecies of the Old Testament and that God is through with the nation Israel.

Some time ago a Christian organization held a prophetic congress in Jerusalem. It was rather amusing because a meeting that was to be so important ended up as a "tempest in a

teapot." Many writers who covered the congress said that the city of Jerusalem did not even know that it was taking place. It is interesting to compare this congress with the Council at Jerusalem in [Acts 15](#) when the whole city was shaken. Half of those present in the congress had no place for the nation Israel in God's plan for the future. They felt that God was through with Israel. If that were true, why did they go to Jerusalem to hold a prophetic congress? They could have gone just as well to Scappoose, Oregon, or Muleshoe, Texas. God is not by any means through with Israel, as we shall see. Stifler states this view:

It has been tacitly assumed in Christian interpretation that Judaism's day is over; that an elect, leveling church built on faith in Christ was the intent of the law and the prophets; and that it was the duty of all Jews to drop their peculiarities and come into the church. Such an assumption the Jews ascribed to Paul. It is strangely forgotten that the mother church in Jerusalem and Judaea never had a Gentile within its fold, that none could have been admitted, and that every member of that primitive body of tens of thousands was zealous of the law ([Acts 21:20](#)). They accepted Jesus as the Messiah, but abandoned none of their Old Testament customs and hopes. Christianity has suffered not a little in the continuous attempt to interpret it not from the Jewish, but from the Gentile point of view. The church in Jerusalem, and not the church in Antioch or Ephesus or Rome, furnishes the only sufficient historic outlook (James M. Stifler, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 162).

My friend, it is a very narrow view to assume that God is through with the nation Israel. Paul's answer to, "Hath God cast away his people?" is a sharp negative: "God forbid" ([Rom. 11:1](#)). He is going to show that the promises that God made to the nation Israel are going to be fulfilled to that nation. Also he will show that God has made certain promises to the church, and today He is calling out an elect people, both Jew and Gentile, to form the church. This is exactly the conclusion to which the Council at Jerusalem came ([Acts 15](#)). This is actually the crux of the interpretation of prophecy: "And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are his works from the beginning of the world" ([Acts 15:13-18](#)).

James is making it very plain that God is calling out a people to His name. When He concludes this, He will remove the church from the earth and will turn again to Israel. But even at that time, God is not through with Gentiles. We are told that all the saved Gentiles at that time will enter the Kingdom with Israel, and God's Kingdom will be set up on this earth. This historical factor cannot be ignored.

The doctrinal factor concerns the right dispensational interpretation and the sovereign purposes of God. Paul has traced in the first eight chapters the great subjects of sin, salvation, and sanctification -- all the way from grace to glory. In this age, nationality, ritual, and ceremonies have no weight before God. Faith is the only item which God accepts from man. Any person, regardless of race or condition, can find mercy. This does seem to level out the very distinctions made in the Old Testament. But Paul is going to

answer that, and he begins by the rhetorical question: "Hath God cast away his people?" ([Rom. 11:1](#)). The answer, of course, is that He has not. Paul began this epistle, you remember, by saying that the gospel is "to the Jew first" ([Rom. 1:16](#)), which I think means that chronologically it was given to the Jew first.

Chapters 9 -- 11 is a very important section. It may not deal with Christian doctrine, but it deals with the eschatological, that is, the prophetic, section of the Bible that reveals God is not through with Israel.

Now as we begin chapter 9, notice that this has to do with God's past dealings with Israel. In chapter 10 we will see God's present dealings with Israel and, in chapter 11, God's future dealings with Israel as a nation. God's reason for dealing with the nation in the past did not derive from their exceptional qualities or superior efforts. On the contrary, all of God's actions are found in His own sovereign will. He functions through mercy in His dealings with Israel and all others -- with you and me. Luther's statement affords a fitting introduction to this chapter. "Who hath not known passion, cross, and travail of death cannot treat of foreknowledge (election of grace) without injury and inward enmity toward God. Wherefore take heed that thou drink not wine while thou art yet a sucking babe." This is strong medicine we are going to look at here.

Israel Defined (9:1-5)

I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost [[Rom. 9:1](#)].

Let me give you my translation of this verse: I speak the truth in Christ, I do not lie, my conscience in the Holy Spirit bearing witness with me.

This seems to be a very formal introduction coming from the apostle Paul, but you must remember that at the time he wrote this he was accused of being an enemy of his own people. We are told in [Acts 23:12](#), "And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul." Now Paul uses an expression that is a favorite with him: "I tell the truth, I do not lie."

that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart [[Rom. 9:2](#)].

It is impossible for us to appreciate adequately the anguish of this great apostle for his own nation. His patience in the presence of their persistent persecution is an indication of it. He knew how they felt toward Christ and toward Christianity, for he once felt that way himself. He had been a Pharisee, a leader; he longed for them to come to Christ as he had.

For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh [[Rom. 9:3](#)].

I'd like to give you a different translation of this: For I was wishing (but it is not possible) that I myself were accursed (devoted to destruction) from the Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.

The verse presents a real problem in translation. If you want a free translation, here it is: For I was once myself accursed from Christ as my brethren, my kinsman according to the flesh.

Frankly, I do not understand Paul at all, if our Authorized Version has translated it accurately. Paul has just said in chapter 8 that nothing can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus. Now Paul says, "I wish I were accursed." That is idle wishing, Paul. You can't be accursed -- you just told us that. This, then, is just an oratorical gesture; you are not sincere when you say a thing like this.

However, the apostle Paul is always sincere. He didn't use oratorical gestures. So I believe he is saying, "For I was once myself accursed from Christ just like my brethren. I know I cannot be accursed, and I want them to come to know Christ and be in my present position." Professor J. A. Bengel said, "It is not easy to estimate the measure of love in a Moses and a Paul." Moses expressed the same sentiment in [Exodus 32:31-32](#), "And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin -- ; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written."

Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises;

Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen [[Rom. 9:4-5](#)].

Paul raises the question: Who are Israelites? There are eight things that identify Israelites:

1. The Adoption. The adoption was national and pertained to the national entity, not to separate individuals. The only nation that God ever called His "son" is the nation Israel: "And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn" ([Exod. 4:22](#)). Again in [Deuteronomy 7:6](#). "For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth." Either God meant this or He did not mean it. And if He didn't mean it, then I don't know why you believe in [John 3:16](#) -- both promises are in the same Book. I believe [John 3:16](#), and I believe [Deuteronomy 7:6](#). He said "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt" ([Hos. 11:1](#)). God speaks of the nation -- not just an individual -- the nation of Israel as being His son. He never said that of any other people. The adoption belongs to Israel.

2. The Glory. This was the physical presence of God with them as manifested in the tabernacle and later in the temple. [Exodus 40:35](#) reveals, "And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle." The children of Israel are the only people who have ever had the visible presence of God. There is no visible presence of God today. We need to remember that fact.

Many years ago there was an evangelist who put up a tent in Southern California. He bragged that you could see angels walking on top of the tent and that you could see angels inside the tent. The minute he made a statement like that I knew there was

something radically wrong. I also knew there was an explanation, and there was -- the man died an alcoholic. I imagine that, after two or three drinks, you could see angels walking on tents, and he probably did. But only Israel truly had the visible presence of God. The church does not have it. Why? Because the Spirit of God indwells every believer, making real the living Christ who is at God's right hand.

3. The Covenants. God has made certain covenants with the nation Israel that He intends to carry out. Many of them He has already carried out. He said He would make them a blessing to all people. He said to David that this One would come in his line. All of this has been fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ. God made many covenants with Israel -- with Abraham, with David, with the nation -- which He has not made with any other people. To Israel belong the covenants.

4. The Law. The Mosaic Law was given to the nation Israel. "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine" ([Exod. 19:5](#)). Then God says in [Exodus 31:13](#), "Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you." This is for the nation Israel, you see.

I have been asked, "Why don't you keep the Sabbath Day?" I do not keep it because I am not a member of the nation Israel. Others have asked me, "Did God ever change the Sabbath Day?" God has not changed the Sabbath, but He has sure changed us. We are in Christ, and that is a new relationship. He gave the Mosaic Law to Israel.

5. The Service of God. This had to do with the worship of the tabernacle and temple. They were to be a kingdom of priests. "And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel" ([Exod. 19:6](#)). The nation failed God, but God did not give up His purpose that they should be priests. God took the tribe of Levi and gave them the responsibility of serving and caring for the tabernacle and, later on, the temple. In the future, in the millennial Kingdom the nation Israel will once again be God's priests upon the earth.

6. The Promises. The Old Testament abounds with promises made to these people. God told Joshua, "Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel" ([Josh. 1:2](#)). The children of Israel were to possess the land. I was over there some time ago, but I didn't cross the Jordan because it wasn't safe -- probably someone would have shot at me. Several years ago I did cross the Jordan River, but not because God gave a command to Joshua and the people of Israel. I have never felt that any of the land of Palestine belonged to me. The land is beginning to bloom like a rose, but much of that land is still barren. It will be a beautiful land again when the Lord Jesus comes to rule. It has never been my land, and it never will be. The land of Palestine was given strictly to the Jews.

7. The Fathers. This refers primarily to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

8. Christ the Messiah. He came according to the flesh. When He came to this earth, He was a Jew. The woman at the well called Him a Jew (see [John 4:9](#)). Paul is careful to say

that we know Him no longer after the flesh: "Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more" ([2Cor. 5:16](#)). Paul identifies Jesus as God, and to Paul He is the God-Man. [John 1:14](#) tells us, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." Christ came as a human babe to the nation Israel. The woman at the well identified Him as a Jew, and I think she was in a better position to say who He was than some scholar in New York City sitting in a swivel chair in a musty library.

Perhaps "Christ the Messiah" should be separated from the other seven features because it is greater than all the others. "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham" ([Heb. 2:16](#)).

Israel Identified (9:6-13)

The Israel of another time period has already been defined. Now let us identify them in Paul's day and in our day also.

Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel [[Rom. 9:6](#)].

This is a strange expression. In other words, not all the offspring, the natural offspring of Israel, are the real Israel. The Jew in Paul's day raised the question as to why the Jew had not wholeheartedly accepted Christ since theirs was an elect nation. Is not this failure on God's part? Paul partially dealt with this problem at the beginning of [Romans 3](#). Now Paul is going to make a distinction between the natural offspring of Jacob and the spiritual offspring. Always there has been a remnant, and that remnant, whether natural or not natural, has been a spiritual offspring. This is a distinction within the nation Israel, and he is not including Gentiles here at all. The failure was not God's; but the people had failed. God's promises were unconditional.

Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called [[Rom. 9:7](#)].

This verse is a devastating blow to the argument of those who were attempting to stand against Paul. If the "seed" were reckoned on natural birth alone, then the Ishmaelites, Midianites, and Edomites would be included. A fine Arab man in Jericho said to me several years ago, "I want you to know that I am a son of Abraham." I could not argue against that. He was a son of Abraham. These others were all the physical offspring of Abraham. To be the natural offspring of Abraham was no assurance that a person was a child of promise.

You will recall what the Jews said to the Lord Jesus on one occasion, ". . . Abraham is our father. Jesus said unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham." Then the Lord continued saying, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it" ([John 8:39](#), [44](#)).

That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed [[Rom. 9:8](#)].

The apostle Paul makes a clear distinction between the elect and the nonelect in the nation Israel. "The children of the flesh" are not the children of God. "The children of the promise" are the ones counted for the seed. In [Acts 21:20](#) Dr. Luke tells us, "And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law." There were in Israel thousands of Jews who turned to Christ after His death and resurrection. They were the elect, and Paul always called them "Israel." When we come to the Book of the Revelation where our Lord was speaking to the churches (the turn of the first century), He says to them in effect, "They do not even belong to a synagogue that worships Me any longer; it is a synagogue that worships Satan" (see [Rev. 2:9](#); [Rev. 3:9](#)).

For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son [[Rom. 9:9](#)].

The children of the promise are not those who believed something -- Isaac did not believe before he was born! Isaac was the promised seed. God promised, and God made good.

Now we are coming to some strong statements.

And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac [[Rom. 9:10](#)].

Isaac and Rebecca are likewise given as an illustration of this principle of the divine election.

(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) [[Rom. 9:11](#)].

Although this verse is in parentheses, its truth is of supreme importance. Some explanation may be offered for God's rejection of Ishmael, but that is not possible in the case of Isaac and Rebecca's children -- those boys were twins! God rejected the line of primogeniture, that is, of the first born, and chose the younger son. At that time Jacob had done no good, and Esau had done no evil. It does not rest upon birth -- that was identical -- and it does not rest upon their character or their works. Paul makes the entire choice rest upon "the purpose of God according to election." He further qualifies his statement that it is not of works, but rests upon God who calls. However, the calling in this verse is not to salvation.

It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger [[Rom. 9:12](#)].

This is a quotation from [Genesis 25:23](#), which was given before the two boys were born. "And the LORD said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger."

As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated [[Rom. 9:13](#)].

This is a quotation from the last book in the Old Testament (see [Mal. 1:2-3](#)). This statement was not made until the two boys had lived their lives and two nations had come from them, which was about two thousand years later, and much history had been made. A student once said to Dr. Griffith Thomas that he was having trouble with this passage because he could not understand why God hated Esau. Dr. Thomas answered, "I am having a problem with that passage too, but mine is different. I do not understand why God loved Jacob." That is the big problem. It is easy to see why God rejected Esau, friend. He was a rascal; he was a godless fellow, filled with pride, and from him came a nation that wanted to live without God and turned their backs upon Him. I can understand why God rejected Esau, but not why He chose Jacob. The Bible tells us that He made His choice according to His sovereign will.

The Choice Of Israel Is In The Sovereign Purpose Of God (9:14-24)

What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid [[Rom. 9:14](#)].

What will we say to this? Is there injustice with God? Perish the thought! Let it not be. The answer is a resounding no!

The natural man rebels against the sovereignty of God. If anything is left to God to make the choice, man immediately concludes that there is injustice. Why is that?

There are people today who have applauded some of the presidents we have had during the 1960s and 1970s. Apparently -- I don't know if we will ever get the truth -- there have been bad judgments made during their terms in office, and as a result thousands of our boys have died. Yet one of those men received more votes than any man who has run for president. The remarkable thing is that we often do not question the judgments of men, but we do question the judgments of God.

My friend, although we cannot intrude into the mysterious dealings of God, we can trust Him to act in justice. We cannot avoid the doctrine of election, nor can we reconcile God's sovereign election with man's free will. Both are true. Let's keep in mind that this is His universe. He is sovereign. I am but a little creature on earth, and He could take away the breath from me in the next moment. Do I have the audacity to stand on my two feet, look Him in the face, and question what He does? That would be rebellion of the worst sort. I bow to my Creator and my Redeemer, knowing that whatever choice He makes is right. By the way, if you do not like what He does, perhaps you should move out of His universe and start one of your own so you can make your own rules. But as long as you live in God's universe, you will have to play according to His rules. Little man needs to bow his stiff neck and stubborn knees before Almighty God and say, "There is no unrighteousness with Thee" (see [John 7:18](#)).

For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion [[Rom. 9:15](#)].

Moses, you recall, wanted to see the glory of God. God said in effect, "I'll show it to you, Moses, but I'll not show it to you because you are Moses." Now, Moses was a very important person. He was leading the children of Israel through the wilderness. God says, "I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. I will do this for you, not because you are Moses, but because I am God!" Do you know why God saved me? It was not because I am Vernon McGee, but because He is God. He made the choice, and I bow before Him.

So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy [[Rom. 9:16](#)].

God's mercy is not extended as a recognition of human will, nor is it a reward of human work. Human-willing and human-working are not motivating causes of God's actions. Man thinks that his decision and his effort cause God to look with favor upon him. Stifler states it succinctly when he says, "Willing and running may indicate the possession of grace, but they are not the originating cause" (The Epistle to the Romans, p. 172). God extends mercy, and He does it because he is God, my friend. Who are we to question Him? I bow before Him today.

For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.

Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth [[Rom. 9:17-18](#)].

God says that He used Pharaoh. "But," you may say, "he was not elected." No, he sure wasn't. Just think of the opportunities God gave him. Pharaoh would have said, "I am Pharaoh. I make the decisions around here. I reject the request to let the people of Israel go." God says, "You may think you won't, but you are going to let them go." God's will prevails. When the Scriptures say that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, it means that God forced Pharaoh to make the decision that was in his heart. God forced him to do the thing he wanted to do. There never will be a person in hell who did not choose to be there, my friend. You are the one who makes your own decision.

Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? [[Rom. 9:19](#)].

This is the reasoning of the natural man: If God hardened the heart of Pharaoh, why should he find fault with Pharaoh? Wasn't he accomplishing God's purpose?

Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? [[Rom. 9:20](#)].

Human reasoning is not the answer to the problem. The answer is found only in the mystery and majesty of God's sovereignty. Faith leaves it there and accepts it in humble obedience. Unbelief rebels against it and continues on under the very wrath and judgment of the God it questions.

John Peter Lange has well stated it: "When man goes the length of making himself a god whom he affects to bind by his own rights, God then puts on His majesty, and appears in

all His reality as a free God, before whom man is nothing, like the clay in the hand of the potter. Such was Paul's attitude when acting as God's advocate in his suit with Jewish Pharisaism. This is the reason why he expresses only one side of the truth."

You cannot put one little star in motion; You cannot shape one single forest leaf, Nor fling a mountain up, nor sink an ocean Presumptuous pigmy, large with unbelief! You cannot bring one down of regal splendor, Nor bid the day to shadowy twilight fall, Nor send the pale moon forth with radiance tender; And dare you doubt the One who has done it all? -- Sherman A. Nagel, Sr.

The important thing is that God is God, and little man won't change that.

In the next few verses Paul uses the illustration of the potter and the clay. God is the Potter and we are clay. God took man out of the dust of the earth and formed him. He didn't start with a monkey -- man made a monkey of himself, but God didn't make him like that. God took man from the dust of the ground. The psalmist says, ". . . he remembereth that we are dust" ([Ps. 103:14](#)). We forget this sometimes. As some wag has said, when dust gets stuck on itself, it is mud. Abraham took his correct position before God when he said, ". . . Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes" ([Gen. 18:27](#)).

Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? [[Rom. 9:21](#)].

God reaches into the same lump of humanity and takes out some clay to form Moses. Again, He reaches in and takes out of the same lump the clay to make Pharaoh. It was all ugly, unlovely, sightless, and sinful clay at the beginning. His mercy makes a vessel "unto honour"; that is, a vessel for honorable use. It is the Potter's right to make another vessel for "dishonour" or common use.

What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.

And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,

Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? [[Rom. 9:22-24](#)].

Paul has already established the fact that God is free to act in the mystery and majesty of His sovereignty. Now Paul shows that God deals in patience and mercy even with the vessels of wrath. God did not fit them for destruction; the rebellion and sin of the clay made them ripe for judgment. God would have been right in exercising immediate judgment, but He dealt with these vessels, not as lifeless clay, but as creatures with a free will. He gave them ample opportunity to reveal any inclination they might have of obeying God. Although God hates sin and must judge it in a most final manner, His mercy is constantly going out to the creatures involved.

God suggests that the "vessels of wrath" are the Jewish nation, which was destroyed in B.C. 70. Jesus, you recall, announced this destruction, but He wept over the city, and he

prayed, ". . . Father, forgive them . . ." ([Luke 23:34](#)). When the final judgment came in B.C. 70, God saved a remnant. These were "vessels of mercy."

The Choice Of Gentiles In The Scriptural Prophecies (9:25-33)

This is the final division of the chapter. Paul has made it very clear that the nation Israel was chosen by the sovereign will of God, not because of their merit. God not only chose a nation and not only saved those in that nation who turned to Him -- and it's a remnant always -- but among the Gentiles He is calling out a people today to His name.

As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved.

And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God [[Rom. 9:25-26](#)].

"Osee" is the Greek name of the prophet Hosea. This is a quotation from [Hosea 2:23](#), and it refers to the nation Israel. Peter refers this prophecy to the believing remnant in his day which perpetuated the nation. To his people who had turned to Christ, he says, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy" ([1Pet. 2:9-10](#)).

The second prophecy ([v. 26](#)) is from [Hosea 1:10](#) and refers to Gentiles anyplace on the earth who turn to Christ now and in the future. As James put it: "That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things" ([Acts 15:17](#)).

And so God reached into Europe. He did not send the gospel into Europe because the people there were superior. Some members of the white race seem to think that they are superior people. They are not. The Chinese were way ahead of my ancestors in Paul's day. My ancestors -- and perhaps yours -- were there in the forests of Europe. A branch of my family was over in Scotland. I am told they were the dirtiest, filthiest savages who have ever been on this earth. Do you think God carried the gospel to them because they were superior? They were anything but that. "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy" ([v. 16](#)). I thank Him for that -- how wonderful it is!

Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved:

For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth [[Rom. 9:27-28](#)].

A literal translation would be: Isaiah also cried in anguish over Israel, if the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, the remnant only shall be saved; for He [the Lord] will execute His word upon the earth, finishing and cutting it short in righteousness.

The quotation Paul uses is from [Isaiah 10:22-23](#). Only a remnant of Israel will be saved in the Great Tribulation period. If you want to see the percentage, there are approximately fifteen million Jews today. In the Great Tribulation period we know that only 144,000 Jews will be sealed -- that is a small ratio. While I do believe others will be saved during that period, 144,000 will be His witnesses, and a small remnant will be saved. It has always been only a remnant with them, and it is only a remnant with Gentiles. Now don't ask me why -- it is God that shows mercy. If He saved only one, it would reveal the mercy of God, because none of us deserve His mercy.

And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha [[Rom. 9:29](#)].

In this verse Paul is quoting from [Isaiah 1:9](#). This is a startling statement, but it is a fitting climax to the sovereignty of God. Even the elect nation would have been like Sodom and Gomorrah in depravity and rebellion to God if He had not intervened in sovereign mercy and recovered a remnant. What an indictment of proud Pharisaism and proud church membership today! Only God's mercy keeps any of us from going to hell, my beloved.

What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith [[Rom. 9:30](#)].

This is a thrilling statement. Gentiles, without willing or working, found righteousness in Christ because God worked and God willed it. The Old Testament Scriptures had prophesied it. As we have seen, Isaiah had said that Gentiles were to be saved.

But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness [[Rom. 9:31](#)].

In other words, Israel, pursuing after a law which should give righteousness, did not arrive at such a law. This is a terrifying statement. The Jews tried to produce a righteousness of their own through the Mosaic system. They didn't produce it -- look at the nation today. Religious people are the most difficult people to reach with the gospel -- church members, who think they are good enough to be saved.

You will never be able to reconcile the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. But Paul is making it very clear here that if you are going to be saved it is your responsibility. It is "whosoever will may come" (see [Mark 8:34](#)) and ". . . him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" ([John 6:37](#)). You can come; don't stand on the sidelines and say, "I'm not elected." But I have never heard of anybody being elected who didn't run for office. If you want to be saved, you are the elect. If you don't, you're not. And that is all I know about it. I cannot reconcile election and free will. I have come to the place in the sunset of my life that I can say that God is sovereign, and He is going to do this according to His will. And His will is right -- there is no unrighteousness with Him. He won't make a mistake. Men make mistakes; men in government make mistakes, yet people believe in them. My friend, why don't you believe in God? He is righteous, He is good, and whatever He does is right.

Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone;

As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed [[Rom. 9:32-33](#)].

The quotation here is from both [Isaiah 8:14](#) and [Isaiah 28:16](#). The Jews stumbled. To the Gentile the Cross is foolishness. The one who believes, either Jew or Gentile, will be saved. The humble mind will come in simple faith. The natural man will still try to produce salvation by some natural process. He will try to reconcile the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man as if the puny mind of man is capable and infallible.

Chapter 10

THEME: Present state of Israel; present standing of Israel; present salvation for both Jew and Gentile

We have seen the present state of Israel; they are lost. And that is their condition today. They are lost just as the Gentiles are lost. The reason is that Christ is the end of the law of righteousness.

Now Paul turns from the sovereignty of God to the responsibility of man. He began this thought in the concluding verses of chapter 9.

Present State Of Israel (10:1-4)

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved [[Rom. 10:1](#)].

They are responsible, you see; they are responsible to God. Our Lord has said to them, "For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side. And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation" ([Luke 19:43-44](#)). That is the condition of the nation over there today. They are surrounded by nations that want to push them into the sea. Why? You can blame the Arab, you can blame Russia, you can blame everybody. You can blame God if you want to, because He says the reason they are in such a state -- unable to have peace -- is that they did not recognize their time of visitation. So Paul says, "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." Now notice the three great features in His statement:

1. Israel, with all it possessed (see [Rom. 9:4-5](#)) of religion, was not saved. May I say that probably 75 percent of church members are not saved. They are just members of a religious club. They are in rebellion against God in that they will not accept the righteousness God offers in Christ. You can be religious and lost. Israel had a God-given religion, but they needed to be saved. They had religion but not righteousness. They had more than any other nation, but they were lost. Paul's desire was that Israel might be saved.

2. Israel was savable. Bengel says, "Paul would not have prayed had they been altogether reprobate." They were savable. Who would have thought that my ancestors in the forests of Germany were savable? They were as heathen as anyone could possibly be. Yet at that time the Chinese had a civilization. Why didn't the missionaries go in that direction? Why didn't the apostles say, "Let's not bother with those pagan Gentiles; they are not even savable"? Pagan Gentiles were savable, and the Jews were savable also.

3. They are on the same plane before God today as Gentiles and should be evangelized as any other people without Christ. There is no difference today. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" ([Rom. 3:23](#)). The idea of a superior race or an inferior race is ridiculous. The ground at the foot of the Cross is all level. Whoever you are, your social position, your church membership, your good works, or the color of your skin will not help you. Without Christ you are a hell-doomed sinner. God is just and righteous when He says that to you. Perhaps you say, "I don't like what that preacher said," Well, it is actually what God said, my friend. God is putting it in neon lights here. He doesn't want you to miss it.

There are those today who believe that the gospel ought to go to Israel first. I think Paul meant that chronologically it went to the Jew first. For the first few years in the city of Jerusalem and in all Israel there was not a Gentile saved. The church was 100 percent Jewish. Although I do not believe we are told to evangelize the Jew first in our day, I certainly do believe that the Jew should not be left out. He is in the plan and purpose of God, and he should have the gospel. I disagree with a man like the late Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr, a recent liberal theologian, who is reported to have said (by Time magazine in 1958), "Do not try to convert Jews . . . Jews may find God more readily in their own faith than in Christianity." He maintains this viewpoint, so he says, "especially because of the guilt they are likely to feel if they become Christians." However, coming to Christ is the way to get rid of guilt. They should have the gospel -- all people should have it. God is prepared to show mercy today.

For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge [[Rom. 10:2](#)].

I know some churches, friend, where the members are as busy as termites. On Monday night they play basketball. On Tuesday night it is football. On Wednesday night it is volleyball. On Thursday night it is baseball. On Friday night they just "have a ball." They have something going on every night. They have a "zeal of God" -- they like to do it all in the name of Jesus. But all they have is religion. My friend, do you have Christ? Have you accepted the righteousness that God offers in Christ Jesus? You cannot be saved on any other basis. You have to be perfect to go to heaven, and I have news for you: you are not perfect. Neither am I perfect. But I am going to heaven because Jesus died for me, was buried, and rose again from the dead. He was delivered for my offenses and was raised for my justification. He is my righteousness. I will go to heaven one day because He took my place. Is Jesus Christ your Savior? Forget your church membership for awhile. I do not mean to minimize your membership, but do not trust it for salvation. The average church today is as dead as a dodo bird. A fellow said to me some time ago concerning the church, "I would just as soon go out and play golf on Sunday." Knowing the church he attended, I understood how he felt. In fact, I believe he could be more spiritual out on the

golf course than he could be in a service in that church. The point is that he should find a church that is really preaching Christ. Oh, how wonderful He is! How important it is to have a personal relationship to Him.

For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God [[Rom. 10:3](#)].

This was true of Israel, and it is true of the average church member today. Dr. Griffith Thomas commented on this lack of discernment. "Is it not marvellous that people can read the Bible and all the time fail to see its essential teaching and its personal application to themselves? There is scarcely anything more surprising and saddening than the presence of intellectual knowledge of God's Word with an utter failure to appreciate its spiritual meaning and force." I have seen men, officers of the church, who carry such big Bibles under their arms that they leaned in that direction when they walked down the street. I watched them for twenty-one years and saw no spiritual growth. They just did not grow. They had no discernment whatsoever. So many church people have no real discernment of what it really means to be saved.

For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth [[Rom. 10:4](#)].

"Christ is the end of the law" means He is the goal. Our Lord made it clear. He said in effect, "I didn't come to patch up an old garment; I came to give you a new garment -- the robe of My righteousness" (see [Matt. 9:16](#)). The Mosaic Law was given to lead men to Christ; it wasn't given to save men. Paul said to the Galatian believers that ". . . the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" ([Gal. 3:24](#)). The Law was not given to save us, but to show us that we needed to be saved. It takes us by the hand, brings us to the Cross of Christ, and says, "Little fellow, you need a Savior." The Law came to an end in Christ. "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace" ([Gal. 5:4](#)). William R. Newell (Romans Verse by Verse, p. 393) made the statement: "The Law is no more a rule of life than it is a means of righteousness." It is for everyone that believes, which suggests both the freeness and universality of salvation. "Everyone" -- universal. "Believeth" -- oh, the freeness of it! Why don't you accept it?

Present Standing Of Israel (10:5-12)

For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them [[Rom. 10:5](#)].

Granted that you could attain a righteousness in the law, it would be your own righteousness, not God's righteousness. It could never measure up to His.

But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) [[Rom. 10:6](#)].

He talks about ascending up to heaven to bring it down, or going down to hell and bringing it up. My friend, the righteousness that Paul is talking about -- he quotes from [Deuteronomy 30:11-14](#) -- is available!

Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) [[Rom. 10:7](#)].

You don't have to make a trip anywhere to get it.

But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach [[Rom. 10:8](#)].

It is available right where you are sitting. A great many folk think they have to go to an altar in some sort of meeting to be saved. But salvation is available to you right where you are now.

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation [[Rom. 10:9-10](#)].

There are many folk who maintain that a believer has to make a public confession of faith. That is not what Paul is saying here. It does not mean to go forward in a public meeting. In the church I served for twenty-one years I saw many people come forward, but they were not all saved. Paul is not saying that you have to make a public confession.

Paul is saying that man needs to bring into agreement his confession and his life. The mouth and the heart should be in harmony, saying the same thing. It is with the heart that you believe. Your "heart" means your total personality, your entire being. You see, there are some folk who say something with their mouths -- they give lip service to God -- but their hearts are far from Him. When you make a public confession, you be dead sure that your heart is right along with you; that you are not just saying idle words that mean nothing to you personally. If there is confession without faith, it is due either to self-deception or to hypocrisy. If there is faith without confession, it may be cowardice. It seems to me that Paul is saying here that James is accurate, ". . . faith without works is dead" ([James 2:20](#)). If you are going to work your mouth, be sure you have faith in your heart, my friend.

"Believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead" means that the resurrection of Christ is the heart of the gospel. As Paul said earlier, He "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" ([Rom. 4:25](#)).

For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed [[Rom. 10:11](#)].

Paul is quoting from [Isaiah 28:16](#): "Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste." The difference in our translation is not due to Paul's changing the quotation. Rather, the word for confound and make haste is the same. It means to flee because of fear. Paul is quoting Isaiah to enforce his previous statement that the "by faith righteousness" is taught in other passages in the Old Testament. This passage also shows the universal character of salvation in the word whosoever.

For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him [[Rom. 10:12](#)].

There is no distinction between the Jew and the Greek (or Gentile) -- all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. All, if they are to be saved, must come the same way to Christ. The Lord Jesus said, ". . . no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" ([John 14:6](#)). You can't come to Him by the Old Testament ritual or by the Mosaic Law. Salvation is offered to all people on the same basis of mercy -- by faith. Hear and believe the gospel.

Present Salvation For Both Jew And Gentile (10:13-21)

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved [[Rom. 10:13](#)].

This is a remarkable statement, which Paul draws from the Old Testament (see [Joel 2:32](#)), to enforce his argument that salvation is by faith. This makes it very clear that both Jew and Gentile are to call on the Lord. To "call upon the name of the Lord" means to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?
and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?
and how shall they hear without a preacher?

And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written,
How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace,
and bring glad tidings of good things! [[Rom. 10:14-15](#)].

It is necessary to understand Paul's position in order to appreciate these verses. The Jews, his own people, hated the apostle Paul even though they applauded Saul, the Pharisee. He is showing the logic of his position. They rejected his claim, or the right of any of the apostles, to proclaim a gospel that omitted the Mosaic system which had degenerated into Pharisaism.

Paul shows that there must be messengers of the gospel who have credentials from God. Paul, you recall, began this epistle with the claim that he was a called apostle of Jesus Christ (see [Rom. 1:1](#)). There follows a logical sequence. Preachers must be sent in order for people to hear that they might believe, for they would not know how to call upon God. Paul pinpoints all on believing. This, therefore, necessitated his ministry.

Paul clinches this bit of logic with a quotation from [Isaiah 52:7](#) which says: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" This quotation precedes the marvelous fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, which is a prophecy of Christ's death and resurrection. He opened it with the prophet's query, ". . . Who hath believed our report? . . ." ([Isa. 53:1](#)). The law of Moses surely was not glad tidings of good things, but it was a ministration of death.

We are told here that the feet of those who bear glad tidings are beautiful. I believe that my radio program is important, and I am giving the rest of my life to it. I feel it is important to get God's Word out to needy people. One day I was making tapes for the program in my bare feet. I looked at them and concluded that they are not beautiful. There is nothing about feet that causes them to be an object of beauty. But God calls

beautiful the feet of His called-ones and His sent-messengers -- beautiful. John Peter Lange has an appropriate word on this: "In their running and hastening, in their scaling obstructing mountains, they are the symbols of the earnestly-desired, winged movement and appearance of the Gospel itself." That is one of the reasons I love the opportunity provided by radio today. We can scale mountains, go over the plains, reach over the vast expanses of water, and go into the inner recesses of the earth with the gospel. We can go into homes, automobiles, and places of business. We have been even in barrooms with the gospel by radio. It is wonderful to get out the Word of God. It is wonderful to have feet that the Lord calls beautiful!

But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord,
who hath believed our report? [[Rom. 10:16](#)].

While we are amazed at the great number of folk who tell us that they have received Christ because of our ministry, when we look at the total picture, it is a very small minority. Who has believed our report? Not very many.

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God
[[Rom. 10:17](#)].

Oh, this is so important! Faith does not come by preaching philosophy or psychology or some political nostrum; it comes by preaching the Word of God. Until you hear the Word of God, you cannot be saved, my friend.

But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into
all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world [[Rom. 10:18](#)].

While I am not saying that Paul has reference to radio, it certainly applies to radio broadcasting. Radio is a marvelous way of getting God's Word to the ends of the world.

But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you
to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I
will anger you [[Rom. 10:19](#)].

Paul is quoting from [Deuteronomy 32:21](#). Today God is calling out a people from among Gentiles. Paul will develop this thought in the next chapter.

But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought
me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me
[[Rom. 10:20](#)].

Paul quotes from [Isaiah 65:1](#): "I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name." Even Isaiah predicted gentile salvation. The Gentiles in darkness were finding Christ. What excuse could Israel who had the Old Testament Scriptures offer? They are entirely without excuse.

But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands
unto a disobedient and gainsaying people [[Rom. 10:21](#)].

Have you ever stopped to think how tiresome it is to hold your hands out for a long period of time? Try it sometime and see how long you can do it. It is one of the most

tiring things in the world. When Moses held up his hands in prayer to God for Israel's victory in battle, Aaron and Hur had to prop up his hands because he got so tired holding them up (see [Exod. 17:9-12](#)). But God says, "I have been holding out My hands to a disobedient people" (see [Isa. 65:2](#)). No one knows how gracious God has been to the nation Israel.

Stephen's final word to this nation is revealing: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it" ([Acts 7:51-53](#)). This is not confined to Israel. It could be said today that God is holding out His hands to a gainsaying world. I marvel at the patience of God. I do not mean to be irreverent, but if I were running the show on this little earth down here, I would make a lot of changes. I would move in like a bulldozer! But God is just holding out His hands to our gainsaying world.

Chapter 11

THEME: Remnant of Israel finding salvation; remainder of Israel blinded; reason for setting aside the nation Israel; restoration of the nation Israel; reason for restoring the nation Israel

We will see that God has a future purpose with Israel. In chapter 9 we saw God's past dealings with Israel. In chapter 10 we saw God's present dealings with Israel: a remnant of Israel is finding salvation. Perhaps you are saying, "Well, it must be a very small remnant." It is larger than you might think it is. It is estimated that there are about fifteen million Jews throughout the world, and the percentage of those who are believers is probably much higher than that of the gentile world with its four billion people.

We have seen that the nation rejected Christ and the "by faith" righteousness of God in Christ which was offered to them. And now God has rejected them temporarily as a nation. Two questions naturally arise: Has God permanently rejected them as a nation? In other words, does the nation of Israel have a future? Secondly, are all the promises of the Old Testament nullified by the rejection of Israel? Remember that God had promised primacy to Israel in the Old Testament. He had said they would be the head, not the tail, of the nations (see [Deut. 28:13](#)). My friend, all the promises of the Old Testament will have a literal fulfillment. Paul will make that clear.

Remnant Of Israel Finding Salvation (11:1-6)

I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin [[Rom. 11:1](#)].

What people is Paul talking about? Israel. In case the amillennialist might miss this, Paul is very specific. Paul himself is present proof. He is a true Israelite of genuine stock. He is descended from Abraham; he is from one of the twelve tribes of Israel, Benjamin, one of the two tribes that never seceded from the nation. He was 100 percent Israelite.

"God forbid" is more accurately, Let it not be! It is a strong negative. Even the form of the question demands a negative answer. God has not cast away Israel as a nation.

God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying,

Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life [[Rom. 11:2-3](#)].

Paul uses old Elijah as an illustration, and he makes a good one. Elijah stood for God, and he stood alone. How I admire that man standing alone for God against 450 prophets of Baal. And Elijah goes to the Lord to complain. He says, "Lord, I am all alone; I am the only one left." God says, "Wait a minute, you think you are alone, but you are not."

But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal [[Rom. 11:4](#)].

Elijah was totally unaware that God had been working in the hearts of seven thousand men. If there were seven thousand men who had not bowed the knee to Baal, then it follows that there were about twice as many women who did not bow the knee either, if you go by percentages. For the northern kingdom this was a sizable remnant in the day of Ahab and Jezebel.

Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace [[Rom. 11:5](#)].

God always had a remnant in Israel. That remnant today is composed of those Jews who have come to Christ. This is the reason Paul will say later that all Israel is not Israel.

And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work [[Rom. 11:6](#)].

In other words, grace and works represent two mutually exclusive systems. They are diametrically opposed to each other. The remnant at this time is composed of those who are not saved by works or by merit; they are saved by the grace of God. The future purpose of God -- from the day Paul wrote down to the present -- concerns those who will accept Christ.

What about those who do not accept Christ? Well, the remainder of Israel is hardened.

Remainder Of Israel Blinded (11:7-10)

It is important to notice that they were hardened because they failed; they did not fail because they were hardened. A lot of folk get the cart before the horse -- in fact, they get the horse in the cart, and it doesn't belong there!

What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded [[Rom. 11:7](#)].

Did they fail to come to Christ because they had been blinded? Oh, no. They had been exposed to the gospel as no other people have been exposed to it. God said, "All day long have I stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people" ([Rom. 10:21](#)). He has been patient with them. Now they are blinded because they would not accept the light He gave them.

(According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day [[Rom. 11:8](#)].

They had rejected, you see. When a man rejects, he becomes the most difficult to reach with the grace of God.

And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompence unto them [[Rom. 11:9](#)].

This is a quotation from [Psalm 69:22](#) which says, "Let their table become a snare before them: and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap." The table has reference to feasting, which is representative of material prosperity. The children of Israel had great feasts at which they were actually guests of God -- they did not invite God to their feasts as the pagans did -- rather, God invited them. The Passover was a notable example. The thought here is that they were feasting in a conceited confidence which was entirely pagan. Their carnal security deceived them as to their true spiritual ruin. They trusted the things they ate without any true confidence in God. My friend, this is the condition at the present moment of multitudes of church members. They come to the Lord's Supper without a spiritual understanding.

Let their eyes be darkened that they may not see, and bow down their back away [[Rom. 11:10](#)].

God gives light in order that men might see, but if they are blind, they will not see. The light reveals the blindness of multitudes today. I am amazed that so many intelligent people do not seem to understand what the Bible is all about.

Reason For Setting Aside The Nation Israel (11:11-21)

The nation Israel was set aside for the salvation of the Gentiles. Paul deals with this in the following section.

I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy [[Rom. 11:11](#)].

In other words: I say then, did they stumble in order that they might fall? Away with the thought -- that's not it. But by their false step, salvation has come to the Gentiles, to provoke Israel to jealousy.

Now Paul opens this verse with the same engaging inquiry as he did [verse 1](#). Do you remember that he raised the question, "Hath God cast away his people?" ([v. 1](#)). Rejection is only partial and temporary. His question is, "Have they stumbled in such a way that they will not rise again?" The answer is an emphatic negative. Their fall has enabled God through His providence to open the gates of salvation wide to the Gentiles. The Jew will

see the reality of salvation of the Gentiles, that they are experiencing the blessings of God which the Jew thought could come only to him. This should move him to emulation, not jealousy as we define it. In our trips to Israel, we have had several guides who were Jewish. They were puzzled that we were so interested in things that are Jewish in the nation Israel. They marveled at that. I have visited other countries and enjoyed them. I enjoyed England because some of my ancestors came from that area. In Egypt I saw the pyramids and that great hunk of rock there, and now that I have seen it, I don't want to see it again. But I have an interest in Israel that is not equaled in any other nation. The Jewish people don't understand this. One Jewish guide talked to me about it. He said, "I want to know why these things are so important to you."

Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? [[Rom. 11:12](#)].

Israel has been set aside; that is, God is not dealing with them as a nation at this time. When God does begin to deal with them, they won't have any problem with the Arab -- that conflict will be completely resolved. Israel will not live in fear, because God has made it very clear that every man is going to dwell in peace and tranquility. "But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it" ([Mic. 4:4](#)).

Now since their setting aside has brought the grace of God to Gentiles, what about the grace of God toward the Gentiles after the Jews are received again? It will be multiplied. James made this clear at that great council at Jerusalem. He said that God is calling out from among Gentiles a people for His name just as He is calling out Israelites. Then God says, "After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things" ([Acts 15:16-17](#)). This is my reason for periodically making a statement -- that sometimes puzzles folk -- that the greatest "revival" took place on this earth before the church got here. (I use the word revival in the popular sense of a turning to God.) A man by the name of Jonah went into the city of Ninevah and saw the entire city turn to God. It is true that there was a great turning to God on the Day of Pentecost (which marks the beginning of the church), but what was the percentage? Pentecost was a feast in Jerusalem to which all male Israelites were required to go -- there must have been several hundred thousand Jews in the environs of Jerusalem. How many were saved? Well, judging from the record, there were probably about ten thousand who were saved after the first few days of preaching. That is actually a small percentage. And the greatest revival since then took place in the Hawaiian Islands. The percentage there was probably 50 percent. But that was small in comparison to the days of Jonah. And I believe that the greatest revival will take place after the church leaves this earth. Actually, the church has not done too well. I believe that after the church has been raptured, multitudes of Gentiles will turn to God -- not only in the Great Tribulation period, but in the Millennium. Gentile nations will enter the Millennium, and a great many of them are going to like the rule of Christ, and they will turn to God during that period. I believe this with all my heart.

For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:

If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them [[Rom. 11:13-14](#)].

Perhaps my translation will help you in the understanding of these two verse: "But I speak to you, the Gentiles. Inasmuch, then, as I [Paul] am an apostle of Gentiles, I glorify my ministry, if by any means I may move to emulation, that is, provoke to jealousy them of my flesh, and may save some of them."

In other words, Paul says, in effect, "I am an apostle to the Gentiles, and I rejoice in that. But as I preach to the Gentiles, I hope it will move many of my own people to turn to Christ also." Paul, you remember, wrote to the Corinthians, "And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law" ([1Cor. 9:20](#)).

This is the reason Paul went to Jerusalem with his head shaven and under an oath -- he was trying to win his people to Christ. Should he have done this since he lived under grace? Living under grace means that he could do it if he wanted to. In his letter to the Corinthians he continued, "To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law" ([1Cor. 9:21](#)). In other words, he was obeying Christ. Then Paul says, "To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" ([1Cor. 9:22](#)). He was first of all fulfilling his office as an apostle to the Gentiles, and in so doing, he was trying to move his Jewish brethren to turn to Christ. Some turned to Christ -- only a few -- but some. In all of this Paul was fulfilling his ministry, and God was accomplishing His purpose in this age with both Jew and Gentile.

I understand the satisfaction Paul felt in doing what God had called him to do. God has a place for you, my friend. He may want you to get busy and teach a Sunday school class, do personal work, or reach people through a business enterprise. Or He may want you to support another who is really getting out the Word of God. Whatever it is, you will experience great satisfaction in doing what you are confident God has called you to do.

For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? [[Rom. 11:15](#)].

It is wonderful to anticipate the future. I think the greatest days are ahead of us. From man's point of view, the future is dark. Man has gotten his world in a mess. I felt sorry for a businessman to whom I was talking in Hawaii. We started chatting on the golf course. He told me that he was a businessman from Chicago -- a vice-president of some concern. Obviously he had money, but, oh, how pessimistic he was about the future. Many thinking people are very pessimistic about the future of our civilization. But my God is on the throne, and He is going to straighten it out. The greatest days are yet in the future. Oh, the glorious future a child of God has. If I were not a dignified preacher, I would say Hallelujah!

For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches [[Rom. 11:16](#)].

You may recall that in the Book of Numbers, God said, "Of the first of your dough ye shall give unto the LORD an heave offering in your generations" ([Num. 15:21](#)). "Dough," of course, is bread dough! A part of the dough was offered to God as a token that all of it was acceptable.

The "firstfruit" evidently refers to the origin of the nation: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

"Holy" has no reference to any moral quality, but to the fact that it was set apart for God. Now if the firstfruit, or the first dough -- that little bit of dough -- was set apart for God, what about the whole harvest? Since Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were set apart for God, what about the nation? It all belongs to God, you see. God is not through with the nation Israel.

And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree [[Rom. 11:17](#)].

You and I benefit because of the nation Israel. That is the reason I could never be anti-Semitic. I owe too much to them as a nation.

Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.

Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in [[Rom. 11:18-19](#)].

The "olive tree" is a picture of the nation Israel, and the "wild olive" is the church. Everything you and I have is rooted in the fact that God called Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and that out of the nation Israel He brought Jesus Christ, our Savior and our Lord.

Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear [[Rom. 11:20](#)].

The important thing is that they were set aside because of their unbelief. Oh, my Christian friend, you do not stand before God on your merit, your church membership, or your good life. You stand on one basis alone: your faith in Jesus Christ.

Now Paul gives a word of warning.

For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee [[Rom. 11:21](#)].

Since God did not spare the nation Israel when they apostatized, the argument is that He will not spare an apostate church. I am more and more convinced that the church which is based on a philosophy or ritual or some sort of gyroreflection -- the type of church which was designated in the third chapter of the Book of Revelation as the church of Laodicea -- will go into the Great Tribulation. As Dr. George Gill used to say, "Some churches will meet on the Sunday morning after the Rapture, and they won't miss a member." That's Laodicea.

In contrast to this, He says to the church of Philadelphia, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation [that is, the Tribulation], which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" ([Rev. 3:10](#)). He promised to keep from the Tribulation that church which has an open door before it and is getting out the Word of God. My friend, I belong to that church; I hope you do also. It is an invisible body of believers. This is the church that will be taken to meet Christ at the time of the Rapture, which precedes the Great Tribulation.

Restoration Of The Nation Israel (11:22-32)

Now we shall see that the restoration of the nation Israel will bring the greatest blessing.

Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off [[Rom. 11:22](#)].

These are stern words. Paul calls upon the Gentiles to behold two examples. Rejected Israel reveals the severity of God, but to the Gentiles who have turned to God, the benevolent goodness of God is revealed. These two sides of God need to be revealed today: the judgment of God against the rejection of Christ against sin, and the grace of God to those that will trust Christ.

Paul did not have the complete picture of the severity of God toward Israel. The history of Israel in the destruction of Jerusalem in B.C. 70 and all that succeeded it is a terrifying story. My friend, let's not trifle with the grace of God. It is grace which has brought us into the family of God and granted us so many privileges. After over nineteen hundred years the gentile church is as much a failure, if not more so, than Israel.

And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again [[Rom. 11:23](#)].

Since God accepted Gentiles who had no merit, surely God can restore Israel who likewise has no merit.

"Again" is the key word. God will again restore Israel. The Old Testament makes it very clear that Israel is going to turn to God again. As an example, read [Jeremiah 23:3-8](#), which is one of the many remarkable prophecies of the restoration of Israel. Zechariah speaks of this: "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn" ([Zech. 12:10](#)). This will be the great Day of Atonement. They will turn to God in repentance, and God will save them just as He saves us -- by His marvelous, infinite mercy and grace.

For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? [[Rom. 11:24](#)].

Paul continues the illustration of the olive tree. The olive tree is Israel with Abraham as the root. Some of the branches were cut off. The nation, as such, was rejected. God

grafted in Gentiles, but not by their becoming Jewish proselytes, which would mean they would have to adopt the Old Testament ritual. Rather, He cut off Israel and grafted in the church -- including both Jew and Gentile -- directly and immediately upon Abraham by faith. If God could and did do that, it is reasonable to conclude that He can and will take the natural branches and graft them in again. In other words, He will not cast Israel away permanently.

For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in [[Rom. 11:25](#)].

"The fulness of the Gentiles" began with the calling out of the church. "Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name" ([Acts 15:14](#)). It will continue until the rapture of the church. Blindness and hardening of Israel will continue as long as the church is present in the world.

The word mystery needs a word of explanation. In the ancient world of Paul's day there were mystery religions. Today it applies in a popular way to a story that has an unrevealed plot or person. It is used in Scripture in neither of these ways. In the New Testament the word is used to refer to that which had been concealed but is now revealed. The mystery here is the identification of the fullness of the Gentiles, which was not a subject of revelation in the Old Testament.

And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:

For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins [[Rom. 11:26-27](#)].

When Paul says "all Israel shall be saved," he does not mean every individual Israelite will be saved. It is the nation he has before us in this chapter. In every age, only a remnant is saved. The quotation Paul uses is from [Isaiah 59:20](#) in the Old Testament: "And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD." The message to the individual is that he will have to "turn from transgression" to the Lord. There will be a remnant that will turn to Him. All of them will be saved. He speaks of the saved remnant as the nation Israel.

There is always only a remnant that is saved. There was a remnant in Elijah's day; there was a remnant in David's day; there was a remnant in Paul's day; there is a remnant in our day; and there will be a remnant during the Great Tribulation period.

As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes.

For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance [[Rom. 11:28-29](#)].

In other words, with reference to the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes; but with reference to the election, they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. For the gifts of grace and the calling of God are without repentance -- without a change of mind. Paul is

summing up the preceding discussion. There have been two lines of thought which are seemingly in conflict and contradictory, although both are true. In the first place, Israel is regarded as an enemy for the sake of the Gentiles -- that is, so the gospel can go to the Gentiles. On the other hand, they are beloved for the sake of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Therefore, a Christian cannot indulge in any form of anti-Semitism -- that is a point I have made before, and continue to make it.

The failure of Israel and our failure likewise do not alter the plan and purpose of God.

"The gifts" are not natural gifts, but the word has to do with grace.

The "calling" is not an invitation, but it is the effectual calling of God, which is "without repentance." In other words, God is not asking even repentance from an unsaved person. The "calling of God" does not require any human movement. From God's viewpoint it is without man's repentance or change of mind. Some folk think they have to shed tears in order to be saved. Now certainly the shedding of tears could be a by-product of an emotional person who turns to Christ, but the tears have nothing in the world to do with your salvation. It is your faith in Christ that saves you. And neither is your faith meritorious. It is Christ who is meritorious. Your faith enables you to lay hold of Him.

For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief:

Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy [[Rom. 11:30-31](#)].

You see, Paul is writing to Gentiles -- the church in Rome was largely composed of Gentile believers. By this time, many Gentiles were being saved. He is drawing a contrast here between the nation of Israel and the Gentiles. In times past, the Gentiles did not believe, but now a remnant of the Gentiles have "obtained mercy." During this same time period Israel as a nation, which formerly believed, does not now believe. Paul puts down the principle by which God saves both Jew and Gentile: it is by mercy. Just as God showed mercy to the Gentiles, He will show mercy to the nation Israel.

For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all [[Rom. 11:32](#)].

Both Jew and Gentile are in the stubborn state of rebellion and aggravated unbelief. Because of this, by grace we are saved, through faith; and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any of us should boast (see [Eph. 2:8-9](#)).

Reason For Restoring The Nation Israel (11:33-36)

What is the reason that the nation Israel will be restored? Well, that is locked in the riches of the wisdom of God. My friend, let's rest on the fact that what God is doing is wise, it is right, and it is the best that can be done. You and I have an old nature that questions God when He makes a decision. I have heard many Christians say, "Why are the heathen lost when they haven't heard the gospel? God has no right to condemn them!" My friend, God has every right imaginable. He is God. And what He is doing is right. If you don't think it is right, your thinking is wrong. And if you don't think He is being smart, you are wrong.

God is not stupid. You and I may be stupid, but God is not. Oh, how we need to recognize this!

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! [[Rom. 11:33](#)].

Paul has come to the place of recognizing the wisdom and the glory of all that he has been discussing.

Godet's statement on this section is worth quoting: "Like a traveller who has reached the summit of an Alpine ascent, the apostle turns and contemplates. Depths are at his feet, but waves of light illumine them, and there spreads all around an immense horizon which his eye commands."

This section is pure praise and is no argument at all, yet it is the greatest argument of all. If we do not understand the why of God's dealings with Israel, with the Gentiles, and with ourselves, it is not because there is not a good and sufficient reason. The difficulty is with our inability to comprehend the wisdom and ways of God. "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" ([1Cor. 2:14](#)).

Once, while driving back from Texas to California, my little girl developed a fever of 104 degrees. I took her to a hospital in Phoenix, Arizona. She did not understand why I had taken her to the hospital, especially when the doctor probed around and actually made her cry. She said, "Daddy, why did you bring me here?" She did not understand that, since she was sick, I was doing the wisest thing I could do under the circumstances and that I was doing it because I loved her. Oh, my friend, God is doing what is best for us. We may not understand the things that happen to us, but we must believe that it is for our good that God allows them. We are like little children, and we cannot understand God's ways. Our circumstances may not always seem to be good, but they come from the "depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God." God says to us, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" ([Isa. 55:8-9](#)). Oh, how we need to recognize this fact.

For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?

Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? [[Rom. 11:34-35](#)].

These questions that we have here are simple enough, but the answer is not so easy.

"Who hath known the mind of the Lord?" Well, no one knows the mind of the Lord -- that's the answer. It was Paul's ambition to know Him. He says, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death" ([Phil. 3:10](#)).

"Who hath been his counsellor?" No one can advise God. I have seen a lot of church boards that felt they were really giving God good advice, but He doesn't need it. Have

you noticed that the Lord Jesus never asked for advice when He was here on earth? One time -- before feeding the five thousand -- He asked Philip, ". . . Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" Why did He ask that question? "And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do" ([John 6:5-6](#)). He didn't need Philip's advice. The fact of the matter is, he didn't use His disciples' advice. They said, "Send them away." He said, "You give them something to eat." My friend, God does not ask for advice, although a lot of folk want to give Him advice today.

"Who hath first given to him?" Have you ever really given anything to God which put Him in the awkward position of owing you something? If you were able to give God something, He would owe you something. What do you have that He hasn't already given you? I think one reason many of us are so poor is simply because we return to Him so little of what He has given us. To tell the truth, God says He won't be in debt to anybody. When somebody gives Him something, He turns around and gives him more. Years ago someone asked a financier in Philadelphia, a wonderful Christian man, "How is it that you have such wealth, and yet you give away so much?" The financier replied, "Well, I shovel it out, and God shovels it in; and God's shovel is bigger than my shovel!" Oh, my friend, most of us are not giving God a chance to use His shovel! We cannot do anything for Him -- He will give us back more than we give to Him.

For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom
be glory for ever. Amen [[Rom. 11:36](#)].

This just lifts me to the heights. Let me give you my translation: Because out of Him, and through Him, and unto Him are all things. To Him be the glory unto the ages. Amen.

Alford labeled this verse "the sublimest apostrophe existing even in the pages of inspiration itself."

"Out of Him" means God is the all-sufficient cause and source of everything.

"Through Him" means God is the mighty sustainer and worker. ". . . My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," Jesus said ([John 5:17](#)).

"Unto Him" means God must call every creature to account to Him. All things flow toward God.

"To whom be glory" -- the glory belongs to Him in all ages. Are we robbing God of His glory by taking credit for things we have no business to claim? The glory belongs to Him.

Oh, my friend, what a section of Scripture we have been in, and we leave it reluctantly.

Chapter 12

THEME: Relationship to God; relationship to gifts of the Spirit; relationship to other believers; relationship to unbelievers

This is the beginning of the final division in the Book of Romans. As you recall, the first eight chapters were doctrinal; the next three chapters were dispensational; now the emphasis in this last section is duty. We come now to the practical application of the

theological arguments that Paul has placed before us. Here the gospel walks in shoe leather -- and that is where I like it to walk.

In the first part of Romans the reader saw displayed the helmet of salvation and the shield of faith. But in this last section, the feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. We are to stand in the battle; we are to walk in our life; we are to run in the race.

Someone may suggest that we have already studied the practical application in the section on sanctification. There the gospel walked in shoe leather, it is true, but there is a sharp distinction in these two sections. Under "sanctification" we were dealing with Christian character; in this section we are dealing with Christian conduct. There it was the inner man; here it is the outward man. There it was the condition of the Christian; here it is the consecration of the Christian. There it was who the Christian is; here it is what he does. We have seen the privileges of grace; we now consider the precepts of grace. Enunciation of the way of life must be followed by evidences of life. Announcement of justification by faith must be augmented by activity of life.

There is something else we should note as we proceed into this last section. The conduct of the Christian must be expressed in this world by his relationship to those with whom he comes in contact, and these relationships must be regulated in some way. It is so easy to put down rules of conduct, but Paul is not doing that. He has delivered us from the Mosaic Law, and he did not deliver us in order to put us under another legal system. There are a lot of Christians who call themselves separated Christians because they don't do this, they don't do that, and they don't do about fifteen other things. I wish they would do something, by the way. I have found that those folk have gossiping tongues -- you had better watch them. They ought to recognize that the child of God is not given rules and regulations. However, Paul puts down great principles that are to guide the believer. The Holy Spirit is giving the believer a road map of life, showing the curves but not the speed limit. He identifies the motels and eating places which he recommends without commanding the believer to stop at any certain one. Detours are clearly marked, and there is a warning to avoid them. The city of Vanity Fair is named, and the routes of exit are clearly marked. The believer is told to leave without being given the exact route by which to leave -- there are several routes.

We are coming down the mountain top of [Romans 8](#) -- [Romans 11](#); we leave the pinnacle of [Romans 11:33-36](#), and we now plunge down to the plane of duty -- and it is plain duty. This is where we all live and move and have our being.

Relationship To God (12:1-2)

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service [[Rom. 12:1](#)].

In other words: Therefore, I beg of you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you yield your bodies -- your total personalities -- a living sacrifice, set apart for God, well-pleasing to God, which is your rational or spiritual service.

Notice that the "therefore" ties it into everything that has come before it. Although it has immediate connection with that which has just preceded it, I am of the opinion that Paul is gathering up the whole epistle when he says, "Therefore."

"I beg of you" is the language of grace, not law. There is no thunder here from Mount Sinai. Moses commanded; Paul exhorts. Could Paul have commanded? Well, he told Philemon that he could have given him a command, but he didn't. Paul doesn't command; he says, "I beg of you."

"By the mercies of God" -- the plural is a Hebraism, denoting an abundance of mercy. God is rich in mercy; God has plenty of it, my friend. He has had to use a lot of it for me, but He still has plenty of it for you. "Mercy" means compassion, pity, and the tenderness of God. His compassions never fail.

We are called upon to "present" -- to yield. This is the same word we had, you recall, back in chapter 6. Although some expositors suggest that there it refers to the mind while here it refers to the will, I think it is a false distinction. The appeal in both instances is to the will. In the sixth chapter, the way of Christian character is to yield to Him. Here yielding is the way to Christian consecration and conduct.

He says to yield "your bodies," your total personalities. The body is the instrument through which we express ourselves. The mind, the affections, the will, and the Holy Spirit can use the body.

Vincent has assembled the following Scriptures which reveal this wide latitude. We are told to glorify God in our bodies. "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" ([1Cor. 6:20](#)). "According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death" ([Phil. 1:20](#)). "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body" ([2Cor. 4:10](#)).

By an act of the will we place our total personalities at the disposal of God.

This is our "reasonable service," our rational service, and it is well-pleasing to God.

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God [[Rom. 12:2](#)].

Kenneth S. Wuest has an excellent translation -- actually an interpretation -- of this verse: "And stop assuming an outward expression that does not come from within you and is not representative of what you are in your inner being, but is patterned after this age; but change your outward expression to one that comes from within and is representative of your inner being, by the renewing of your mind, resulting in your putting to the test what is the will of God, the good and well-pleasing, and complete will, and having found that it meets specification, placing your approval upon it" (Romans in the Greek New Testament, p. 290).

Although this is rather elaborate, it is exactly what Paul is saying in this passage of Scripture. Paul is urging the believer not to fashion his life and conduct by those around him, even those in the church.

I know two or three groups of folk who, when they come together in a meeting, assume a front that is not real at all. They are super-pious. Oh, I tell you, when they meet on Sunday night, you would think they had just had their halos shined. They are not normal and they are not natural. Yet if you want to hear the meanest and dirtiest gossip, you meet with that group! The child of God ought not to be like that. We ought to be normal and natural -- or probably I should say, normal and supernatural. It is so easy to play a part. That is what the word hypocrite really means. Hypokrites is the Greek word for actors. They were playing a part. Hypokrites means to answer back. In acting it means to get your cue and to say the right thing at the right time. In our daily lives hypocrisy is to seem to be something that we are not. I have learned over the years that some folk who flatter you to your face, smile, and pat you on the back can be your worst enemies. They are dangerous to be with. It was Shakespeare who said something about the world being a stage and that every man must play a part. This is not true of the believer. He must be genuine because the Holy Spirit is working from within, transforming his life by "renewing" the mind.

Again and again Paul calls attention to this. To the Corinthians he said, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" ([2Cor. 3:18](#)). Also to Titus he said, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" ([Titus 3:5](#)).

By permitting the Spirit of God to renew the mind, the believer will be able to test the will of God and find it good. The minute that you and I assume a pose and pretend to be something we are not, it is impossible for us to determine the will of God for our lives. By yielding, the will of God for the life of the believer becomes good and fits the believer's will exactly. It's first good, and then it is acceptable, and finally it is perfect, in that the believer's will and God's will are equal to each other. My friend, you can't improve on that kind of situation. Paul could say, "I can do all things." Where? "Through Christ which strengtheneth me" ([Phil 4:13](#)). The believer can do all things that are in God's will. It is wonderful not to have to act the part of being Christian, but just be natural and let the Spirit of God move and work through you. Handley C. G. Moule (The Epistle to the Romans, p. 335) has put it like this:

I would not have the restless will That hurries to and fro, Seeking for
some great thing to do Or secret thing to know; I would be treated as a
child, And guided where I go.

Oh, to reach the place of just turning this over to the Lord! Paul begs us to do this. This is the way of happiness. This is the way of joy. This is the way of fullness in your life. If you are in a church or in a group of play actors, for God's sake get away from it and try to live a normal Christian life where you can be genuine. A man said to me the other day, "My wife and I have quit going to such and such a group." I asked why. He told me, "We just got tired of going to a place where you almost have to assume something that you are not. Everyone there is being absolutely abnormal. The way I found out was that I had an

occasion to meet a super-pious member of the group in a place of business. I hardly recognized the man -- his manner and everything about him was different." He was "conformed to the world" when he was not with the pious group. Oh, to be a normal Christian and enjoy God's blessing.

Relationship To Gifts Of The Spirit (12:3-8)

For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith [[Rom. 12:3](#)].

This is my translation: For I am saying through the grace given to me, to everyone among you, not to be thinking of himself more highly than that which is necessary to think, but to think wisely of oneself, even as God has divided a measure of faith to each one.

My translation may have lost something of that pungent statement: "not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think." I imagine that when Paul wrote this, there was a whimsical smile on his face, because there are a great many Christians who are ambitious, who feel that they must have positions of prominence. And I have found out in Christian work that a great many folk in the church want to hold an office. If you want to be a successful pastor today and get a bunch of folk working like termites, you create a great many offices, committees, boards, and have presidents, chairmen, and heads of organizations. You will get a lot of people working who would never work on any other basis. Why? Because they think more highly of themselves than they ought to think.

What we need to do, as Paul says here, is "to think soberly." He says that we ought not try to advance ourselves in Christians circles. There is the ever-present danger of the believer overestimating his ability and his character and his gifts. We need to have a correct estimation of ourselves in relationship to other members of the church.

When I became pastor of certain churches, I was invited to serve as a board member of certain organizations. Finally I was serving on about a dozen or fifteen boards, and I was really a bored member. I was bored for the simple reason that I don't have gifts for that type of thing. To begin with, I don't have the patience to sit and listen to pages of "minutes" that take hours to read. And the second thing is that I just don't like to sit in a board meeting and listen to a group of incompetent men discussing spiritual matters. It took me a long time to find out I didn't have the kind of gift that would make me helpful in such situations, and I was killing myself going to board meetings. The Christian life became a round of being bored. Finally one day I came to myself, like the prodigal son, and I sat down and wrote twelve or more letters of resignation. That was one of the happiest days of my life. And today I am not on anybody's board. I have several friends who say to me, "Oh, won't you be on my board?" I say, "No, I wouldn't help you. I have no gift for it. I'm for you, I'll even pray for you, but I cannot be on your board." My friend, we are not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. We need to recognize our inabilities and do the things God wants us to do. It is a joy to get into the slot where God wants you to be!

For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:

So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another [[Rom. 12:4-5](#)].

This is the first time that Paul has introduced the great theme of the church as the body of Christ. This is the primary subject in Paul's letter to the Corinthians, Ephesians, and Colossians. The church as the body of Christ is to function as a body. This means that the many members do not have the same gifts. You may have a gift that I could never exercise. There are many members in the body, hundreds of members, and therefore hundreds of gifts. I do not think Paul ever gave a complete list of all the gifts because every time he dealt with gifts of the Spirit he always brought up new gifts which he had not mentioned in previous lists. I am sure the Spirit of God led him to do that.

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith [[Rom. 12:6](#)].

"Gifts" is the Greek word charismata, which comes from the same stem as the word for grace. It can be translated as "grace" or "free gift" and is what the Spirit of God gives you. He gave to the church men who had the gift of a prophet, or a teacher, etc.

"Having then gifts" -- each member of the body of Christ has a gift and a function to perform.

"Differing" means that the gifts differ; it does not mean that some folk do not have a gift. Every individual in the church has a gift. And the gift is part and parcel of the grace of God to us. When God saves you and puts you in the body of believers, you are to function. You are not to function as a machine, but as a member of a body, a living organization. When the gift is exercised, it is confirmed by the power of the Holy Spirit. Every believer needs to test his gift. If you feel that you have a certain gift and you are using it, you ought to test it. Analyze your effectiveness: Are you really a blessing to folk? Are you building up the church? Or are you dividing the church?

"Prophecy" here does not refer to prediction but to any message from God. Notice that prophecy is to be done in "proportion" (this is a mathematical term) to God's provision of the faith and the power to match the gift.

Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching [[Rom. 12:7](#)].

"Ministering" is performing an act of service, referring to a manifold ministry with practical implications. There are multitudinous forms for service in the body of believers which this gift covers -- setting up chairs and giving out songbooks is a ministry. Some folk do not have a gift of speaking, but they do have a gift of service. I know one dear lady who can put on a dinner that will make everybody happy. And I believe in church dinners; if you look at me, you will know I have been to quite a few of them -- and many that this lady put on. That is her gift, and I've told her that. She would never make a good president of the missionary society, and you wouldn't want her to sing in the choir, but if you want to put on a church dinner for some purpose, she is the one to get. "Ministering" includes many gifts, my friend.

Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness [[Rom. 12:8](#)].

"Exhortation" is the Greek word paraklesis, literally "a calling near" or "a calling for." In other words, exhortation is comfort. Some folk have the gift of being able to comfort. I know one pastor who is not a preacher -- he knows he is not -- but if I were sick or had lost a loved one, he is the man I would want to come to visit me. He can comfort.

"He that giveth" is he that shares his earthly possessions. God may have given you a gift of making money -- and that is a gift. I know several Christian businessmen who have the Midas touch. That is their gift.

"He that ruleth, with diligence" refers to the gift of leadership. There are certain men who are leaders, and they need to exercise their gift in the church so that everything might be done decently and in order. The business of the church requires a man with the gift of administration.

"He that sheweth mercy" indicates the gift of performing acts of kindness. For instance, there are some believers who can bring a sunbeam into a sickroom, while others cast a spell of gloom.

Relationship To Other Believers (12:9-16)

Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good [[Rom. 12:9](#)].

"Let love be without dissimulation" -- that is, without hypocrisy. Don't pat another believer on the back and say something that you don't mean. Let love be without hypocrisy.

"Abhor that which is evil" means to express your hatred of that which is evil. When you find something wrong in the church, bring it to the attention of the proper authorities. If you are on the board of directors and you find things are being done which are not honest, you are to stand up for the truth. There are too many Mr. Milquetoasts and Priscilla Goodbodies, these sweet folk who haven't the intestinal fortitude to stand for that which is honorable. This is the reason many good, fundamental churches are in trouble today. We need men and women with backbone to express their hatred for that which is evil.

"Cleave to that which is good." Cleave means to stick like adhesive tape, to be welded or cemented together with the good things. The believer should always be identified with good things rather than shady or questionable practices.

Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;

Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord [[Rom. 12:10-11](#)].

My, how wonderful these things are: have a code of honor, and be aglow with the spirit of God. Never flag in zeal -- have a zeal for the things of God.

"Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love." In other words, as to your brotherly love, have family affection one to another. Farrar puts it in this language, "Love the brethren in the faith as though they were brethren in blood." For example, three men are sitting together. Two of the men are identical twins; one twin is a Christian and the other is not. Sitting with these men is a believer from Africa. His culture, background, and language are all different. The color of his skin is different, but he knows the Lord as Savior. The Christian twin is actually closer to the man from Africa than he is to his twin brother. My friend, you ought to be nicer to your fellow believer because you will have to live with him throughout eternity. You had better start getting along now and practice putting up with his peculiar ways. However, he will have a new body then, and he will be rid of his old nature -- and you will also! It will make it better for both of you.

"Not slothful in business" is better translated "never flag in zeal." It has nothing to do with business. Luther gives it this translation: "In regard to zeal be not lazy."

"Fervent in spirit," or aglow with the Spirit, suggests that our zeal and enthusiasm should be under the control of the Holy Spirit.

"Serving the Lord" points everything in Christian conduct toward this focal point.

Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;

Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.

Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not [[Rom. 12:12-14](#)].

"Rejoicing in hope" should be the portion of the believer. The circumstances of the believer may not warrant rejoicing. The contrary may be true. But he sees the future, and in hope projects himself into other circumstances which are more favorable. I think of a brother down in my Southland years ago. In a church service they were giving favorite Scripture verses. He stood and said that his favorite verse was "It came to pass." Everyone looked puzzled. The preacher stood up and said, "Brother, how in the world can 'It came to pass' be your favorite?" His answer was, "When I have trouble, and when I have problems, I like to read that verse, 'It came to pass,' and I know that my trouble or my problem has come to pass; it hasn't come to stay." He was looking for a new day out there, and that is what Paul has in mind when he says, "rejoicing in hope."

"Continuing instant in prayer" is to be a man or woman of prayer.

"Distributing to the necessity of saints" means sharing the necessities of life with needy believers. A great many churches make a great deal of having a fund for the poor, but how much do they use it? God expects us to share what He has given to us with fellow believers who are in need.

"Given to hospitality" means actually to pursue hospitality. That is, we are to seek out other believers to whom we can extend hospitality. There may be a person in your neighborhood or even in your church who is introverted and retiring yet longs for Christian fellowship. We are to look him up and extend our fellowship to him.

"Bless them which persecute you" seems to be a needless injunction for believers. Surely one believer would not persecute another -- or would he? It is difficult to bless a man who is kicking you! But we are to bless and "curse not."

Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits [[Rom. 12:15-16](#)].

"Rejoice with them that do rejoice." The world's motto is "Laugh and the world laughs with you; weep and you weep alone." But that is not true of the believer. We are to enter into the joys and sorrows of other believers. Weep with those who weep.

"Be of the same mind one toward another" doesn't mean uniformity of thought but that we are to have the mind of Christ.

Believers ought to enter emotionally into the lives of other believers. I think that is something that makes genuine Christians so wonderful.

"Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate." My friend, let's not be afraid of associating with humble men and things of low estate. Paul said to the Philippians, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" ([Phil. 2:5](#)) -- what kind of a mind did Christ have? A humble mind.

"Be not wise in your own conceits." In other words, stop being wise in your own opinion. What an injunction that is! A great many of the saints think they are spiritual giants, but they are not. Solomon, who was a man with wisdom from God, gave a very interesting injunction: "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him" ([Prov. 26:12](#)). I wouldn't dare say a thing like this, but Solomon said it.

Relationship To Unbelievers (12:17-21)

You and I live in a world of unbelievers. What is to be our relationship with them?

Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men [[Rom. 12:17-18](#)].

"Recompense to no man evil for evil." The suggestion is that the believer may expect evil at the hands of the world. However, we are not to strike back.

"Provide things honest in the sight of all men." There is nothing that can hurt the cause of Christ more than a dishonest Christian. The non-Christian is not concerned about the doctrine you hold -- whether you are a premillennialist or whether you believe in election or free will. However, he does want to know if you are truthful or not, and he does want to know if you pay your honest debts. Are you a person that a man can depend upon? Providing things honest in the sight of all men is a lot better than giving out tracts, my friend. Let me illustrate this. Some years ago in Memphis, Tennessee, a Christian handed a man a tract. "What is this?" asked the man. The Christian replied, "It is a tract and I

want you to read it." "I don't read," the man replied, "but I will tell you what I will do -- I will watch your tracks!" Oh, how accurate that is! The world is watching the tracks that you make, not the tracts you give out. Don't misunderstand me; giving out gospel tracts is important. But you had better have a life that will back them up when you give out tracts.

"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably" -- I love this because there are people that you just cannot get along with; they won't let you get along with them. A dear lady who lived alone, a wonderful Christian, called me one day in deep concern because she had a neighbor whom she couldn't get along with, and she wondered if I would come and talk with the neighbor. As I was driving out there, I was thinking that since this lady had been living alone, although she was a Christian, she might be a little difficult herself. So I went out and talked to her neighbor. Well, the neighbor told me what she thought of me as well as this dear lady. I went back to this wonderful Christian and said, "I don't think you need to worry anymore if you can't get along with her. Nobody can get along with that woman. The Bible says 'as much as lieth in you'; it doesn't say you have to get along with her. Just do the best you can."

Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head
[\[Rom. 12:19-20\]](#).

This is one of the greatest principles you will find in the Word of God, yet it is the most difficult thing for a child of God to do. When somebody hits you on one cheek, it is difficult to turn the other cheek. I am like the Irishman who was hit on one cheek, and he got up and turned the other cheek. This time the fellow hit him so hard, he knocked him down. Then the Irishman got up and beat the stuffings out of the other fellow. Somebody asked him, "Why in the world did you do that? You turned the other cheek; why didn't you leave it like that?" "Well," he said, "the Bible says to turn your cheek, and I had only one other cheek to turn. The Lord didn't tell me what to do after that, so I did what I thought I ought to do." That is what most of us do. We find it difficult not to hit back. But the minute you and I take the matter into our own hands and attempt to work the thing out by hitting back as hard as we can, we have taken the matter out of God's control, and we are no longer walking by faith. God is saying to us, "You walk by faith with Me, and let Me handle the matter for you, because I will handle it in a just manner. If this person has injured you, I'll take care of him." You and I can turn these matters over to the Lord, and we ought to do that. I can tell you what to do, but I confess that I find it most difficult to do myself. But there have been one or two times when I have turned it over to the Lord, and I have been amazed at how well He handled it. He does it a lot better than I do it.

There was a man, an officer in one of the churches I served, who did me a great injury, a terrible injury. My first thought was to clobber him, but I remembered this passage of Scripture. I went to the Lord and said, "Lord, I'd like to hit back and I can, but I don't think I will. I'll turn him over to You, and I expect you to handle him." Well, I saw that man the other day. I have never looked at a person who is as unhappy as that man is. He has troubles, friend. The Lord has taken him to the woodshed and whipped him within an

inch of his life. When I looked into that man's face, I couldn't help but feel sorry for him. I wish I could say that I turn all of these matters over to the Lord, but I confess that sometimes I hit back.

Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good [[Rom. 12:21](#)].

In other words, stop being overcome of evil; overcome evil by means of good. As the believer walks through this evil world with its satanic system, he cannot fight it. If you attempt to fight this satanic system, my friend, it will whip you. You cannot adopt the same worldly tactics of hate and revenge. If you do, you can be assured of defeat.

"Overcome evil with good." God has given the believer the "good," which is the Holy Spirit. He is to walk in the Spirit. "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh" ([Gal. 5:16](#)). Paul goes on to say, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" ([Gal. 5:25](#)).

Chapter 13

THEME: Relationship to government; relationship to neighbors

As we come to chapter 13, we still are talking about the service of the sons of God. We are going to see that the believer has citizenship in heaven, but he also is a citizen in the world down here, which gives him a twofold responsibility. If there is a conflict between the two always our first responsibility is to our Lord in heaven.

The Lord Jesus made it very clear that we have a responsibility to human government. You remember that He was asked by His enemies, "Is it lawful to pay tribute to Caesar, or not?" He asked them to show Him a coin -- He wanted to teach them from something they themselves had, and also I don't think He had a coin in His pocket that day. He didn't have much while He was down here in this world. He asked them whose superscription and whose image was on that coin. They said, "Caesar's." Then He made this significant statement, ". . . Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's" ([Luke 20:25](#)).

Governments are ordained of God, and He gave them certain authority. At the very beginning of human government He said, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man" ([Gen. 9:6](#)). God has a regard for human life; it is precious in His sight. You have no right to take another human life. If you do, you are to forfeit your own life. Our contemporary society feels differently about it and makes the criminal the hero and the honest man the villain. We live in a day when evil is called good and good is called evil. However, believers have a responsibility to human government. In fact, Paul said to a young preacher, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour." ([1Tim. 2:1-3](#)). By the way, we are to pray for those in authority, not leave it to the preacher on Sunday morning.

The duty of the believer as a citizen of heaven is spiritual. The duty of a believer as a citizen under a government is secular. These two are separate functions, and to combine them is to fail to keep church and state separate and distinct.

The Jew in Paul's day was reluctant to bow before the proud Roman state. Jewry had fomented disturbances in the city of Rome, and as a result Claudius had banished them on one occasion. The proud Pharisees rejected the Roman authorities in Palestine in their desire to restore the government to the nation of Israel; it was they who masterminded the encounter with Jesus and raised the issue, "Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?" The implications smacked of revolution, as you can see. It is well to remember that the authorities in Paul's day were mad and murderous. Nero was on the throne of Rome, and there was Pilate and Herod -- all a bunch of rascals, yet he said that believers were to obey those in authority.

Relationship To Government (13:1-7)

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God [[Rom. 13:1](#)].

We are to submit ourselves to governmental authorities for the very simple reason that they are ordained of God. It is true that the kingdoms of this world belong to Satan and that injustice and corruption abound in all governments; yet God still has control. History is the monotonous account of how a government flourished for a time in pomp and pride and then was brought to ruin and rubble. Why? Because corruption and lawlessness became rampant. As it did, God brought the government to an end. God still rules -- even over this earth. God has not abdicated His throne; He is riding triumphantly in His own chariot. Neither is He disturbed about what is happening on this earth.

You will recall that when Uzziah, king of Judah, died, Isaiah was disturbed and very much discouraged. Uzziah had been a good king, and Isaiah thought the government would disintegrate after he was gone. So Isaiah went into the temple, which is a good place to go at a time like that. He came into God's presence, and He saw the Lord sitting upon the throne, high and lifted up. In other words, God had not abdicated. Uzziah was dead, but God was not dead. God was still on the throne.

Now the allegiance of the Christian is to that throne. And his relationship to his government on earth is submission.

Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation [[Rom. 13:2](#)].

In other words, anyone resisting the authority is resisting the ordinance of God. And those resisting shall receive for themselves judgment.

The principle stated in [verse 1](#) raised many questions which the following verses amplify and explain. This verse seems to preclude the possibility of a believer having any part in rebellion or revolution. What about it? James Stifler cites the examples of Cromwell and Washington. Both of those men led a revolution. Stifler offers no solution. I am not sure I have one either, but I am going to do the best I can to solve this. The believer has

opposed bad government and supported good government on the theory that good government is the one ordained of God. The believer is for law and order, as over against lawlessness. He is for honesty and justice, as over against corruption and rank injustice. At great moments of crisis in history -- and that's where we are today -- the believers have had difficult decisions to make.

I want to briefly give you my viewpoint, and I believe that it will coincide with history. During these last days, which I believe we are in right now, lawlessness abounds. The believer must oppose it; he must not be a part of it, even when it is in his own government. We need to beware of those who would change our government under the guise of improving it. Remember John the Baptist was beheaded by Herod, Jesus was crucified under Pontius Pilate, James, the brother of John, was slain with the sword of Herod, and Paul was put to death by Nero. Yet Paul says, "Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation" ([v. 2](#)). Therefore, Christianity never became a movement to improve government, help society, or clean up the town. The gospel was the power of God unto salvation of the individual. Paul never went around telling about the deplorable conditions of Roman jails -- and he knew them well from the inside. When visiting Rome, my wife and I went to the Mamertine prison, and I got claustrophobia down there. I said to my wife, "Let's get out of here!" But Paul couldn't get out; they kept him down in that damp, dark prison. Remember he wrote to Timothy, "Bring my cloak with you" (see [2Tim. 4:13](#)) -- he was getting cold down there.

It is very difficult to say that we are to obey a corrupt government. I am not impressed by these men -- preacher or politician -- who are running up the American flag and singing the national anthem as promotion for themselves. And behind it is corruption. Frankly, I feel resentful when I hear of certain government officials and certain wealthy men in positions of power who pay no taxes at all when I have a heavy tax burden. There is corruption in government from the top to the bottom, and it is not confined to one party. These unsaved, godless men who are in positions of government actually do not understand the American system. You see, the men who made our laws had a Bible background. I don't know that Thomas Jefferson was a Christian -- he was a deist -- but he had great respect for the Word of God. Many of those men were outstanding Christians -- John Hancock, whose name is first on the Declaration of Independence, was a real Christian. However, in our day the government is corrupt. I go to the civic centers in our cities, and I see fine buildings, costing millions of dollars, which have been built by contractors who are friends of the politicians. Also I see poverty areas. While both parties talk about eliminating poverty, the poverty remains. Oh, corruption is there. What's wrong? Well, the thing wrong is the human heart.

What is the Christian to do? My business is to get out the Word of God, and my business is to obey the law. That is what Paul is saying here. Christianity is not a movement to improve government or to help society clean up the town. It is to preach a gospel that is the power of God unto salvation which will bring into existence individuals like the men who signed the Declaration of Independence and gave us a government of laws.

My friend, nothing is wrong with our form of government; there is something wrong with the individuals who are in positions of power. A professor in the history department of

the University of Michigan summed it up well when he said, "America is in the hands of those who do not understand the spiritual heritage that we have."

For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same:

For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil [[Rom. 13:3-4](#)].

The government is to maintain law and order. When it does not do that, it has failed. I feel that a Christian should be opposed to the breakdown of law and order. We are to respect our rulers who are enforcing the law. I have great respect for our army, although it is honeycombed with corruption. I have great respect for police officers, although I know they make mistakes.

Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake [[Rom. 13:5](#)].

Christians are to obey the law not only because we'll be judged and have to pay a fine if we don't, but obey for conscience sake.

For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing [[Rom. 13:6](#)].

Although we may resent the way our tax money is being used, we are to pay taxes anyway.

In this verse the word for minister is one from which we get our word liturgy. It is strictly religious and is the same word used of angels in [Hebrews 1:14](#) where they are called ministering spirits. This means that the ruler occupies a divinely-appointed office. He has no religious function, of course, but he holds a God-appointed office. That makes me pay my taxes, although I resent doing so.

We need today a heaven-sent revival. I am sick and tired of those who are shedding crocodile tears. They remind me of Lewis Carroll's brilliant satire, Alice in Wonderland. You remember that the Walrus and the Carpenter in this story were walking along the seashore weeping because there was so much sand and not enough oysters. They kept on eating and eating and weeping and weeping. What a picture of corruption! But in all of this the believer should submit to his government.

Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour [[Rom. 13:7](#)].

Although there may be unworthy men in the office, we are to respect the office. When I was in the army, I was told to salute the uniform. There were some folk in that uniform that I didn't care about saluting, but I saluted the uniform. We are to show respect for authority. A Christian will be the best citizen although his citizenship is in heaven.

Relationship To Neighbors (13:8-14)

Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law [[Rom. 13:8](#)].

Did you borrow your neighbor's lawnmower? Take it back to him. Housewife, did you borrow a cup of sugar from your neighbor? Return it, please. Owe no one anything, In this we find Paul saying that the believer is positively to owe no man anything but love. This is a great principle to guide Christians in installment purchasing. You may ask, "Do you think we should turn in our credit cards?" No, but you had better be able to see your way clear in order to pay your debts.

The believer always owes the debt of love to his neighbor. That does not necessarily mean the man next door, but all people with whom you come in contact. This love is not some sentimental thing. I get a little disturbed when I hear liberalism continually talk about love, love, love. How do you reveal love?

For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself [[Rom. 13:9](#)].

"Thou shalt not commit adultery." Now don't tell me that you love someone and are committing adultery with that one. You can call that love if you want to, but it is nothing in the world but sex. It is licentiousness, it is fornication, and it is sin in God's sight. God hasn't changed His mind about it.

"Thou shalt not kill." You can kill a person in more ways than pulling a trigger of a gun. You can destroy them by ruining their reputation.

"Thou shalt not steal." If you love, you won't get something dishonestly.

"Thou shalt not covet." When your neighbor drives up in a new automobile, how do you feel about it? Sometimes we say, "I wish we had the car and they had one just like it." What we really mean is that we would rather have that car than see them have it.

Paul is saying that our love for our neighbor is revealed in what we do rather than in what we say. He is not putting the Christian back under the Law; he is saying that love manifests itself in not committing adultery, not killing, not stealing, not coveting. You can talk about love all you want to, but if you commit these acts against your neighbor, you have no love for him.

Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law [[Rom. 13:10](#)].

Loving your neighbor is the fullness of the Law. This love, let me repeat, is the fruit of the Spirit.

And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.

The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light [[Rom. 13:11-12](#)].

Paul said this nineteen hundred years ago, and certainly we ought to say it with a little more urgency in this day in which we are living. Let me give you my translation: And this -- seeing that ye know the time or the season, that now it is the hour for you to wake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is passing, it is far spent, and the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.

In this closing section an alarm clock goes off to waken believers who have gone to sleep in the world and have forgotten this added incentive for yielding their total personalities to God. My friend, this is not the time for the child of God to live for the things of this world. I think many a rich Christian is going to be embarrassed when the Lord comes. How big will your bank account be, my friend? Are you using your time and what you possess for God? I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye yield your total personalities -- all you are, all you have -- to God. This is rational. This is reasonable. This is what you are supposed to be doing, Christian friend.

If we really are looking for the return of Christ, it will purify our lives. "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" ([1John 3:3](#)). These fellows who get divorces and live like the world, then talk about being premillennial and pretribulational and looking for the imminent coming of Christ, are not being honest. The apostle John says that that man is a liar! Let us wake up, my friend. Let us live for God in this hour!

Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying [[Rom. 13:13](#)].

In other words, let us walk honorably as those in the day; not in revelings and drunkenness, not in sexual intercourse and dissolute abandon, not in strife and jealousy.

We hear a great deal about night life. The believer is identified with day life. He walks as one who belongs to the day.

But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof [[Rom. 13:14](#)].

Oh, how many believers are making every provision for the flesh but are making no provision to go into His presence. My friend, I beg you to put Christ first in your life and to get out the Word of God. This is all-important.

Chapter 14

THEME: Conviction; conscience

This chapter brings us to a new section, the final division in the Epistle to the Romans. It is: the separation of the "sons of God." What do we mean by separation? Frankly, I am tired of "separated" and "dedicated" Christians who are not separated or really dedicated.

There are two areas of Christian conduct. In one area the Bible is very clear, as we saw in the preceding chapter. The duty of the Christian to the state is submission. He is to obey

the laws of the land, he is to pay his taxes, and he is to show respect to those in authority. Also chapter 13 was specific on a believer's relationship to his neighbor. He is to pay his bills; he is not to commit adultery, kill, steal, bear false witness, or covet what another has. In fact, he is to love his neighbor as himself. The believer is to be honest, and he is to avoid reveling and drunkenness, strife, and jealousy. The Bible is very clear on these things.

However, there is another area of Christian conduct on which the Bible has no clear word. Let me mention only two things: the use of tobacco and mixed bathing (that is, both sexes swimming together). If you don't think these are questionable, let me give you an illustration out of my own experience. My wife was reared in Texas in a Southern Baptist church. She was brought up by a mother and father and pastor who believed that mixed bathing was sinful. Then when she came to California, you can't imagine the shock she had the first time she went down to the beach with the young people from our church -- even in those days they weren't wearing much. My wife was in a state of shock for twenty-four hours after that! She had never seen anything like it. However, in the area from which she came the use of tobacco was not frowned upon. The officers of her church smoked; in fact, her pastor smoked. When she came to California, she found that using tobacco was taboo. If you were a Christian, you did not smoke.

Is mixed bathing all right in one place and wrong in another place? Is smoking right in one place and wrong in another place? I am sure that the hair on the back of the necks of some of the saints is standing on end, and they are thinking, Dr. McGee, you ought to give a lecture against smoking, and you let this subject of mixed bathing alone. Let me assure you that I am not condemning either one, nor am I condoning either one. I'm not going to stick out my neck on questionable things any farther than Paul stuck out his neck.

In this section Paul puts down principles of conduct for Christians relative to questionable matters. He gives us three guidelines: conviction, conscience, and consideration. A Christian should have a conviction about what he does. Conviction means "that which anticipates." Does he look forward to what he is going to do in high anticipation and enthusiasm? The second guideline is conscience. Does he look back on what he has done, wondering if he were right or wrong? Or does he even hate himself for what he has done? The third guideline is consideration for others. Are other people adversely affected by what he does? These three guidelines give us principles of conduct for our Christian lives.

In our day there are actually two extreme viewpoints about this matter of Christian conduct in questionable matters. And it has created an artificial atmosphere in which one is to live the Christian life. As a result we have abnormal or subnormal Christians in these extreme areas. One extreme position has no wall of separation from the world; the lives of these folk are carbon copies of the unsaved man of the world. Their lives are no different from what they were before their so-called conversion. They indulge in all forms of worldly amusement. They go everywhere the world goes, and they spend their time and energy in activities that have no spiritual profit. There are certain passages of Scripture that have no meaning for them at all. For example: "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (For many

walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)" ([Phil. 3:17-19](#)). There are other folk who do not indulge in any form of worldly amusement, yet they are as worldly as they can possibly be. They gorge and gormandize themselves. They don't get drunk, but they certainly overeat. Also they overtalk -- they are great gossips. They even tell questionable stories.

Again let me quote Paul: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" ([Phil. 4:8](#)). My friend, your thought life is bound to affect your conduct sooner or later. What you keep thinking about you will eventually do. I have found that a great many Christians think about a temptation for a long time before they actually submit to it. This sort of thing is done by a great many so-called Christians. Paul seemed to question whether or not they were Christians because they lived exactly as the worldling lived.

Now there is a second group that is extreme in the opposite direction. They have reduced the Christian life to a series of negatives. Paul warned the Colossian believers against the group that was characterized by "Touch not; taste not; handle not" ([Col. 2:21](#)). These folk rejoice in salvation by grace and deliverance from the Mosaic Law, but they immediately make a new set of ten commandments -- only they usually double that number. They become very self-centered, very critical, and very proud. These are the ones that Paul labels "weak in the faith" ([v. 1](#)), by the way. And they are the folk who have become very "separated."

The following letter which I received several years ago illustrates the sad state of one who adopts this position.

I've returned to California after a year of full-time Christian service in Ohio and an extended trip east. But I've come back almost spiritually shipwrecked! Have been a Christian for three and one-half years and until recently was able to give a glowing testimony about being saved out of Unity.

But lately, I've been so dead that Christ seems way up there, and I'm way down here. I have all the negative virtues of a Christian (don't smoke, drink, play cards, attend movies, use makeup), but those things do not make a happy Christian! My friends tell me I'm becoming bitter -- and oh, I don't want that to happen!

Before becoming a Christian, I was very ambitious, worked hard for whatever I believed in (and incidently I was listed in Who's Who) -- but now I wonder what's the use? The world is going from bad to worse. Everything is heading for disaster, and the only hope is to wait for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, my friend, this person was in a terrible condition! Notice how "separated" she was, but this kind of separation will not bring joy in the life.

Somewhere between these two extreme viewpoints of questionable matters in Christian conduct the believer is to walk. These are the Scylla and Charybdis through which the believer must sail his little bark on the sea of life.

I have given a great deal of space to these preliminary remarks because I know there are many puzzled Christians who will be helped by what Paul has for us in this important chapter.

Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations [[Rom. 14:1](#)].

To put it another way: Now, the one who is weak in faith, receive him into your fellowship, but not with the view of passing judgment upon his scruples -- that is, upon his conduct and upon his viewpoint.

"Now" connects this chapter to what has preceded it. The law of love will now go into action. Having condemned things (in the last part of [Romans 13](#)) which are immoral and obviously wrong, like killing, committing adultery, stealing, bearing false witness, and coveting, Paul now warns against the danger of condemning questionable matters which are not expressly forbidden in Scripture.

"The one who is weak in the faith" does not mean one who is weak in the great truths of the gospel -- the facts of faith -- but rather it refers to the abstract quality of faith. It means the faith of the weak falters and hesitates about matters of conduct. He does not know what he should do relative to certain things. This one is to be received into the fellowship of believers with open arms. You may not agree with him, but you are to receive him if he is a believer in Jesus Christ. You are not to receive him in order to start an argument about questionable things. One group of believers is not to sit in judgment upon another group of believers about questionable matters of Christian conduct. Some things are not expressly condemned in Scripture, but some believers separate themselves from these things. And if they want to do this, that's their business. To be persuaded" means to be convinced, to be assured in your own mind.

Now Paul changes his illustration from diet to the day question. Some people insist that the Lord's Day is different. Some observe Sunday as the Lord's Day and others observe Saturday. It is not the day that should be different, but the believer. The particular day is not the important thing. Paul said, "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days" ([Col. 2:16](#)). Don't you tell me what day I am to observe. I'm not responsible to you; I am responsible to the Lord Jesus. He is my Master.

When I was a student in seminary, I was in a denomination in the South that were strict Sabbatarians -- Sunday was their Sabbath, as they called it. And they didn't believe in traveling on Sunday. I used to take a train to Augusta, Georgia, to preach, and I left on Saturday evening. Some of the officers of the church wanted to know what time the train got into Augusta! Well, it got in early Sunday morning, and one man said to me, "Doesn't that disturb you?" I said, "It doesn't disturb me at all." Now, I respect that man, and I don't think he ought to travel on Sunday. But when I am traveling from one speaking engagement to another, and it is necessary to travel on Sunday, I do it without the

slightest compunction. Paul says that whatever we do, we should be fully persuaded, convinced, and assured in our own mind that it is the right thing to do.

"Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind" means literally he is to be filled to the brim -- mind, heart, will, and the total personality. A believer should do only those things to which he can give himself fully and without reserve. My friend, whatever you do for God, you should do with enthusiasm. I think it is sinful the way some people go to church on Sunday. Can you imagine people going to a football game when the alma mater is playing with that same lackluster attitude they have when they attend church? Personally, I don't go to football games because I think they are a waste of time. But I don't criticize other folk for going -- that's their business. But when I go to play golf, I go with enthusiasm. And whatever I do for the Lord, I do with enthusiasm. I teach the Bible because I love to teach it. I would rather do it than anything I know of. One of the reasons church work is bogged down as it is today is that there is a lack of enthusiasm. A man is asked to teach a Sunday school class, and he says, "Oh, if you can't get anybody else, I'll take it." Then don't take it, brother, if that is the way you feel. It would be better for the class to have no teacher than a disinterested, unenthusiastic teacher. Some people are actually committing sin by doing church work! The first great principle is: "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."

Now let's bring this principle over to questionable things. Frequently folk, especially young folk, ask me if doing this or that is wrong. I say, "Well, for you I think it is wrong, but for me it's all right." Of course they ask me what I mean by that. I tell them, "I have no question about it. If I wanted to do it, I would do it with enthusiasm. The point is, you have a question about it. 'Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.' You wouldn't have come and asked me the question if you had been persuaded in your own mind." My friend, this is a great guiding principle: if you have a question in your mind about something you are doing -- whatever it is -- for you it is wrong. It might not be wrong for me, but it is certainly wrong for you.

You recall that Simon Peter followed the Lord afar off after He was arrested. Peter went that night into the judgment hall of the high priest. I sat in the hotel in Jerusalem in the old city on the side of the Valley of Kidron one morning. When the morning sun had come up, it set that whole city ablaze across the Kidron Valley. Over there is a church called the Church of the Cock Crowing. It is situated on the spot where the high priest's judgment hall was located -- that's where Caiaphas had his home. And that is the place to which Simon Peter came and where he denied three times that he knew the Lord. I am convinced that Simon Peter should not have gone there that night. On the other hand, John, who apparently had a home in Jerusalem and was known in the palace of the high priest, went there and did not deny his Lord. It was all right for John to be there, but it was wrong for Simon Peter. Simon Peter was the weak brother, you see.

Today it is the weak brother who is the "separated" brother. That may seem strange to you. But the people who set up a little legal system of "dos" and "don'ts" bear watching. They are the weak ones. When I was a student in seminary, I used to have a water fight on Saturday night in the seminary dorm. One of the students would gather together two or three of the super-duper saints, and they would pray for us. (I always hoped he would pray that I would win!) We were pretty rough fellows. One night we soaked all the rugs,

and we almost got booted out of the place. But this young fellow was a model student. About fifteen years later, I sat down with him and his wife and begged him not to leave her. He told me he had to. I said, "Why?" His reply was this, "Because I have a little daughter by a woman out in Australia, and I want to marry her." He posed as a super-duper saint, but actually he was a weak brother.

Questionable amusements are wrong for the believer if they are questionable to him. If he can participate in them and maintain a close relationship to Christ, they are not wrong for him. Let me tell you a little story in this connection. Many years ago in Tennessee a young lady went to her pastor with the question, "Do you think it is wrong for a Christian to dance?" He said to her, "Anywhere you can take Jesus Christ with you is all right to go." That made her angry. She said, "Well, I can take Him to the dance." The pastor said, "Then go ahead." So she went to the dance. A boy whom she had not met before cut in on her and danced with her. She had determined to take Jesus Christ with her, so she asked him, "Are you a Christian?" He said, "No." Wanting to make conversation with her, he asked, "Are you a Christian?" She said, "Yes." And this is what the unbeliever said, "Then what are you doing here?" After she got home that night she decided that maybe she couldn't take the Lord Jesus Christ there after all.

He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks [[Rom. 14:6](#)].

Maybe you play golf on Sunday. If you can take Jesus Christ with you, if you can stop out on the ninth hole and have a prayer meeting with the foursome you are playing with, that would be fine. But what will the foursome playing behind you think when their game is interrupted in this way? When they see you are praying, one of them will say, "What in the world are they doing out here on Sunday morning?"

The important thing to note is that the day is to be "regarded" or observed unto the Lord.

Also, the one who eats meat gives thanks to God from his heart. The one who does not eat meat gives thanks to God from his heart. It is not what is on the table, but what is in the heart that is noted by God. It is the heart attitude that conditions Christian conduct.

For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.

For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living [[Rom. 14:7-9](#)].

"None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself" is generally quoted as a proof text that our lives affect others. However, that thought is not in this passage. The fact is that we as Christians cannot live our lives apart from Christ. Whether you live, you will have to live to Him; whether you die, you will have to die to Him. Our Christian conduct is not gauged by the foods spread out on the table, but by the fact that our lives are spread

out before Him. That is the important thing. One day we are going to have to give an account of the things we have done in this life. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" ([2Cor. 5:10](#)). At that time it will not be a question of the meat you had on the table; it will be the question of your relationship to Him when you sat down at that table. You can be godless without meat; and you can be godless with meat, of course.

Christ's death and resurrection are given as grounds for Him to exercise lordship over both the dead and the living:

But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.

So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God [[Rom. 14:10-12](#)].

"Why dost thou judge thy brother?" You remember that the Lord Jesus said to that bunch of Pharisees who wanted to stone an adulterous woman, ". . . He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" ([John 8:7](#)). And not one of those boys threw any stones that day. My friend, you and I need to recognize that we have to give account of ourselves to Him. I'll be honest with you, that disturbs me a little. I am wondering how I am going to tell Him about certain things. So I can't sit in judgment upon you; I'm worried about Vernon McGee.

Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way [[Rom. 14:13](#)].

Paul is going to develop the thought that our conduct has to be for the sake of the weak brother. If I am traveling in the same car with a fellow who believes he should not travel on Sunday, I'm going to have to stay with him -- not because I agree with him, but for the sake of a weak brother.

I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died [[Rom. 14:14-15](#)].

Since Christ was willing to die for that weak brother, certainly we ought to be willing to refrain from eating something or doing something that would hurt him in his Christian walk.

Let not then your good be evil spoken of [[Rom. 14:16](#)].

In other words, liberty does not mean license. The believer is to use his liberty, not abuse it. We are always to keep in mind how our conduct will affect weaker Christians.

For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost [[Rom. 14:17](#)].

This is the only reference in this epistle to the Kingdom of God. I do not believe the "kingdom of God" is synonymous with the Kingdom of Heaven in Matthew's Gospel, which finds its final fruition in the millennial and messianic Kingdom here on earth. I believe that the Kingdom of God embraces all that is in God's created universe, which, of course, includes the church. It is broader and larger and includes God's reign over all His creation. Lange's definition is satisfactory: "The heavenly sphere of life in which God's word and Spirit govern, and whose organ on earth is the Church." This was our Lord's use of the term. "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" ([John 3:3](#)). Well, that is the heavenly sphere of life in which God's Word and Spirit govern. As Stifler has said (The Epistle to the Romans, p. 245), "God rules everywhere, but there is a realm where he governs by spiritual forces or laws alone" -- which is in the area of the life of the believer. Man is totally incapable of seeing or entering this kingdom without the new birth. This kingdom has nothing to do with eating or drinking, fasting, no meat on Friday, no pork, or a vegetarian diet. These things just do not enter into it.

"Righteousness" in this verse means the same as it does in chapters 1 and 3. It means to be right with God; it means a life lived well-pleasing to Him.

"Holy Ghost" apparently goes with righteousness and refers, not to our standing, but to our walk -- we are to walk in the Spirit. It is practical rather than theological. It is moral rather than oral. It is a righteousness in the Holy Spirit rather than righteousness in Christ.

"Joy" is the fruit of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers. Unfortunately, it is often absent from the lives of believers. There should be joy in our lives. This doesn't mean you have to run around smiling like a Cheshire cat, but it does mean you are to have a joyful feeling deep in your heart.

For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men [[Rom. 14:18](#)].

Although, of course, there will be a literal kingdom on this earth, he is talking here about the spiritual realm that you enter by the new birth. Christ is not served by eating and drinking, but our service to Him must pertain to righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. In these things a believer is well pleasing to God and approved of men.

"Approved of men" does not mean that men will get in your cheering section and applaud you because you are a believer. They may even persecute you. But underneath, men do approve of genuine believers, while they despise and reject that which is hypocritical and phony.

This is a great principle of conduct. The walk and talk of the believer should please God and meet the approval of the conscience of men.

Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another [[Rom. 14:19](#)].

This is a twofold exhortation. To "follow after the things which make for peace" is to eagerly pursue this course of action. The believer is to make a definite effort to avoid the use of food or any physical thing which offends a Christian brother. This would be the negative aspect of the exhortation. The positive aspect is to press toward the mark of spiritual values: righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. These are the things which build up the believer.

For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence [[Rom. 14:20](#)].

On account of food, do not tear down the work of God. Of course the believer has the liberty to eat meat or abstain from it -- but neither will commend him to God. We are not to tear down the work of God in the heart of some weak believer for the sake of some physical gratification. That old bromide is active: one man's porridge is another man's poison. Esau, for instance, had no regard for God or for his birthright. He exchanged it for a bowl of soup. Well, don't sell your birthright just to satisfy your appetite.

It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak [[Rom. 14:21](#)].

Paul returns to these two points: eating and drinking. Then he goes beyond them with the sweeping statement: nor anything. Anything that is questionable and is a matter of conscience for a weak brother becomes wrong for the strong one.

Conscience (14:22-23)

Now [verse 22](#) gives us the second great principle of Christian conduct.

Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth [[Rom. 14:22](#)].

Let me give you my translation of this verse; The faith which thou hast, have thou thyself in the sight of God. Happy is the man who condemneth not himself in the things which he approves -- that which he does.

This is the second principle of conduct for Christians. He has already dealt with the aspect of conviction. As we look toward doing something for God, we ask ourselves the questions: Will it be right for me to do this? Can I do it with excitement and anticipation and joy? Now this second exhortation looks back at what has been done. Happy is the man who does not condemn himself in what he has done. The believer should be able to look back upon his conduct without any qualms of conscience.

Let me use an illustration, and I trust you will not misunderstand it. I have been asked the question: "Can a Christian get drunk?" The answer is yes. The prodigal son in [Luke 15](#) was a son out in the far country. I am confident that he got drunk in addition to a few other things, but he was always a son. Then what was the difference between him and the pigs? The difference was that none of those pigs said, "I will arise and go to my father."

You see, as the prodigal son was there with the pigs, he said to himself, I hate it here, and I'm going to get out of this. I am going back to my father and confess what a sinner I am. What, then, is the difference between the Christian who gets drunk and the non-Christian who gets drunk? The difference is simply this: the next morning the man of the world will get up with a headache, put an ice pack on it, and say, "Boy, I sure had a big time! I'm going to get a bigger bucket of paint and a bigger paint brush, and I am really going to paint the town red the next time!" But what will the child of God do? When he wakes up the next morning with a head as big as a barrel, he drops down by the side of his bed and cries, "Oh, God, I hate myself! I don't want to do that again." He confesses his sins to God. And the interesting thing is there is no record that the prodigal son went back to the pig pen. He didn't like it there. That is the difference between a believer and an unbeliever. "Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth."

My Christian friend, do you look back and hate yourself for what you have done? That is your conscience condemning you. Regardless of what it was and regardless of how many other people do the same thing, for you it was wrong. You might have been in a church (and a church can be a very dangerous place because Satan is there -- he goes to church every Sunday morning, and he goes to the best churches). Do you come home from church and say, "I could bite my tongue off. I wish I hadn't said what I did." Well, you should not have said it. "Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth."

And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin [[Rom. 14:23](#)].

"Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." My friend, you are to believe in what you are doing. If you don't believe in it, you should not be doing it. Here is a new definition of sin for the believer: Any line of conduct or any act which is not the outflow of faith becomes sin. This is the Holy Spirit's answer of questionable things. As the believer is saved by faith, just so the believer is to walk by faith.

Chapter 15

THEME: Consideration of the weak brother; consolidation of Jews and Gentiles in one body; continuation of Paul's personal testimony

We have been looking at the great principles of conduct for the Christian. In the preceding chapter we have seen two of these principles: conviction and conscience. Now we see the third: consideration of the weak brother, a thought which is continued from chapter 14. In the first three verses the subject is separation. Then we shall see the consolidation of Jews and Gentiles in one body to glorify God, and finally the continuation of Paul's personal testimony as the apostle to the Gentiles and to the Romans in particular. This chapter concludes the major argument of the Epistle to the Romans. In the final chapter, Paul will lapse back to personal relationships.

A remark needs to be made here that radical higher criticism has questioned the authenticity of these last two chapters of Romans. Without any valid reason or documentary evidence, the Pauline authorship of these two chapters was rejected. Baur's school led in this objection. Today the Pauline authorship is established, and we may

conclude with this statement from Kerr in his Introduction to New Testament Study, "Despite these objections, the integrity of the epistle as it now stands is certain."

Consideration Of The Weak Brother (15:1-3)

We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak,
and not to please ourselves [[Rom. 15:1](#)].

This is the third and last guiding principle which should govern the conduct of Christians. When you invite a Christian over to your house who doesn't believe in dancing, don't put on a square dance for him, because you will offend him. Now maybe you can square dance, but I cannot. Why? Because there are certain things I very definitely feel I cannot do because of a consideration of others. Neither have I been inside a motion picture theater in years -- I can't even remember the last time I went. Somebody says, "Oh, you are one of those separated fellows who doesn't believe you can go to the movies." Maybe you can go -- I'm not judging you if you do -- but I cannot. One of the reasons is right here: consideration of the weak brother. "We that are strong" I feel applies to me. I feel that I could go without losing my fellowship with the Lord -- I'm sure that many of these movies would disgust me today, to tell the truth. But a weak brother might be strongly influenced and his relationship to Christ actually damaged by certain movies. So we who are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak.

Paul identifies himself with the strong ones, and he insists that these should show consideration for the feelings and prejudices of the weak believers. He wrote to the Corinthians, "Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend" ([1Cor. 8:13](#)). In other words, Paul said, "I can eat meat. I love a good pork roast. But I will not eat it if it is going to offend my brother." Also Paul wrote, "Let no man seek his own but every man another's wealth" ([1Cor. 10:24](#)). Seek the interest of the other man. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" ([Gal. 6:2](#)).

Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification
[[Rom. 15:2](#)].

"For his good to edification" means with a view to his building up. The objective of all Christian conduct is the edification of our neighbor. Of course our neighbor is not to be pleased to his detriment or loss. Paul said, "For thou I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews . . ." ([1Cor. 9:19-20](#)). A great many people criticize Paul and cannot understand why he would take a Jewish oath, shave his head, and go to Jerusalem to the temple. You will understand it if you understand what Paul is saying here: "And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law" ([1Cor. 9:20](#)).

Now let's keep in mind that we are still in the area of questionable things, things that are not mentioned in Scripture as wrong. Going back to the example of the movies. Would I ever go to a movie? Yes, if I thought by so doing I could win someone for Christ. You may ask, "How far can you carry this?" Well, I know a group that went into a burlesque show to witness. I think they were in the wrong place. I know a girl who started going to

nightclubs and drinking with her friends, thinking she could witness to them. But she became an alcoholic, and she didn't win anybody. I can show you from Scripture that these things are wrong.

However, because the Scripture is silent on many things in our contemporary society, we have been given these great guidelines, three principles of separation: (1) Conviction. Whatever we do is to be done with enthusiasm because we are persuaded in our own minds that it is what God wants us to do. (2) Conscience. Our conduct should be such that we do not look back upon it with qualms of conscience. (3) Consideration. We should show consideration for the feelings and prejudices of the weak believers.

For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me [[Rom. 15:3](#)].

The quotation here is from [Psalm 69:9](#). This is an imprecatory psalm and also one of the great messianic psalms. Christ never put His own interest and pleasures first. Stifler thinks that Christ is presented here as an argument rather than as an example. In The Epistle to the Romans (p. 250) he writes, "The Scriptures are not in the habit of holding up Christ as an example, for men are neither saved nor sanctified by an example." Always when Christ is given as an example it is in connection with the redeeming grace of God.

Consolidation Of Jews And Gentiles In One Body (15:4-13)

Paul now begins to talk about the fact that Jews and Gentiles are in one body to glorify God.

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope [[Rom. 15:4](#)].

The Old Testament, therefore, does have a definite application to believers today. I frequently receive letters from folk who say, "I didn't know the Old Testament was so practical," or, "I had not realized that the Old Testament had such meaning for us today. I did not know it spoke of Christ as it does. Paul here says that it was written for "our learning."

In my opinion, the greatest sin in the church of Jesus Christ in this generation is ignorance of the Word of God. Many times I have heard a church officer say, "Well, I don't know much about the Bible, but . . ." and then he gives his opinion, which often actually contradicts the Word of God! Why doesn't he know much about the Bible? These things were written aforetime for our learning. God wants you to know His Word. As an officer of the church, are you boasting that you are ignorant of the Word of God? Well, you had better get down to business and find out what God has said to you in His Word. Ignorance of the Bible is the greatest sin of the hour -- in and out of the church. Paul says these things were written for your learning.

What will a knowledge of the Bible do for you? "That we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." The Word of God imparts patience, comfort, and hope.

You won't find any hope in the daily newspaper. You won't find any hope in modern literature. Look at any field and see if you can find any hope. There is none whatsoever. It is dark and dismal when you look out at this world today. My friend, the only place you can find real hope is in the Word of God.

I was in the state of Washington, speaking at a Bible conference, and it rained and rained and rained. Then it rained some more. Oh, how dark and dismal the days were! For our flight back home we went to the airport, and it was still raining. The plane took off and went up through a heavy layer of cloud. In a few moments we broke out into the light -- the sun was shining up there. Oh, how beautiful it was. Less than a mile up, the sun was shining. Here we had been living like a bunch of gophers in all that rain. Now, don't misunderstand me -- Washington needs all that rain to grow that lush vegetation and beautiful trees. But because I live in Southern California, I am used to sunshine, and I love it.

There are a great many Christians today who are living down beneath the clouds. The Lord says, "Come on up here and get in the sunshine of hope!" That is what the Bible will do for you, my friend. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" ([1Cor. 10:11](#)). When I was teaching the life of David, scores of people told me what an encouragement David was to them. One person said that he was going through a very dark period in his life and that the study in the life of David delivered him from suicide. Well, that is the reason God put these things in His Word. God put David's sin on display -- and it wasn't very nice -- but God paints mankind exactly as he is for our learning. Everything in the Old Testament is written for our learning and to give us patience and to give us comfort and to bring hope into our lives.

Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus [[Rom. 15:5](#)].

Paul pauses here to pray that the blessings which are channeled only through the Word of God might have their effect upon both Jews and Gentiles in the body of Christ; not that they should see eye to eye with each other on meats and drink -- they won't -- but that they might demonstrate that they are one in love and consideration one of another.

That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ [[Rom. 15:6](#)].

There should be such a harmony in their praise that they reveal the unity of believers. When I was a boy in West Texas, we had a Methodist church on one corner, a Baptist church on another corner, and a Presbyterian church on the third corner. A story was told that one night the Methodists were singing, "Will there be any stars in my crown?" And the Presbyterians were singing, "No, not one; no, not one." And the Baptists were singing, "Oh, that will be glory for me." Well, that is just a story. I'm sure it never worked out that way, but sometimes it actually looks like that. However, if the Baptists and Methodists and Presbyterians are really believers (just to be a member of one of these denominations doesn't make you a believer, by the way), all three could sit down and sing

the doxology together: "Praise God from whom all blessings flow." That is the testimony we should give to the world.

Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God [[Rom. 15:7](#)].

Let me give you my translation of this: Wherefore receive ye one another, even as Christ also received you to the glory of God.

God receives man -- both strong and weak, high and low, Jew and Gentile -- on the simple acceptance of Christ. Now let both the strong and the weak receive each other in fellowship. The glory of God is the supreme objective.

A man said to me the other day, "Since you are very critical of the Pentecostal point of view, why is it that Pentecostal brethren are friendly toward you and actually invite you to speak in their churches?" I said, "Well, the reason is that they have more of the grace of God than I have." A recent letter from a Pentecostal pastor read, "We agree on too many things to let one or two differences separate us." When we agree on the major doctrines of the faith, though we may differ on minor points, we need to receive one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God. Although I disagree with Pentecostal brethren on the matter of tongues, I see no reason why I should break fellowship with them. I just pray they will see it as I see it. And the very interesting thing is that one of these days, when we are in His presence, we will agree. In fact, all will agree with me. Do you know why? Because I am going to have to change a whole lot of things also. All of us will be changed, changed into His image and His likeness. Then all of us will agree. In view of that fact, we had better concentrate on the areas in which there is agreement now.

Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers:

And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name [[Rom. 15:8-9](#)].

When the Lord Jesus Christ came into this world, He came as "a minister of the circumcision" -- this is the only time it is mentioned. His ministry was confined to the nation Israel. He frankly said so Himself: "But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" ([Matt. 15:24](#)). Also He directed His disciples: "But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" ([Matt. 10:6](#)). Christ came to earth about nineteen hundred years ago. He came in this capacity to confirm the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God said that from the loins of Abraham He would bring One who would be a blessing to the world. Christ came to be a blessing to both Jew and Gentile. "And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb" ([Luke 2:21](#)). He could not have been "Jesus" unless He had been born in the line of Abraham and David and unless He followed the Law. They called Him Jesus after he was circumcised. He came to fulfill the entire Mosaic system. "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" ([Gal.](#)

[4:4-5](#)). Salvation came to Israel through Christ in confirming and fulfilling the truth of the Old Testament promises. Also by this method salvation was brought to the Gentiles. The Gentiles' only claim was upon the mercy of God. No promise was ever made to their fathers. I do not know who my father was, way back in the beginning in the forests of Germany and in Scotland. I do not know his name. But I do know that God never made any promise to him. He did, however, make a promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Christ came to confirm the truth of the promises made to the fathers of the Jews, and He also came that the Gentiles might obtain mercy. In this the Gentiles are to glorify God. I thank God that He brought the gospel to my ancestors. They were pagan and savage and had done nothing to merit God's grace.

"As it is written" introduces four quotations from the Old Testament that show that the Gentiles are to praise God.

"For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name" is a quotation from [Psalm 18:49](#). Christ is praising God through the Gentiles, which implies their conversion.

And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people [[Rom. 15:10](#)].

This quotation is from [Deuteronomy 32:43](#). It concludes the song of Moses, which is a prophetic recitation of the history of the nation Israel until the coming of the millennial Kingdom. Here the Gentiles are invited to join Israel in praise to God.

And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people [[Rom. 15:11](#)].

This is a quotation from the briefest psalm (see [Ps. 117:1](#)). It is an invitation to the Gentiles to join Israel in praise to God. It is interesting to note the occurrence of the word all twice in this brief quotation.

And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust [[Rom. 15:12](#)].

This quotation is from [Isaiah 11:10](#). Though the Messiah is from the line of David, He is to rule over the Gentiles. Obviously it was the clear intention of God that the Gentiles should come to Christ. Some had come to Christ in Paul's day, and they were the firstfruits of even a greater day. Remember that Paul was writing to the Romans, and the Roman church was largely a gentile church, as are our churches today.

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost [[Rom. 15:13](#)].

"The God of hope" is a new title for God which is thrilling. The believing heart finds here the Rock of Ages who is the shelter in the time of storm. "The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing." This is what a study of Romans should do for you. I trust it has given you joy and peace and that it has strengthened your faith. I trust it has brought hope and power into your life, my friend.

This is the benediction that concludes the doctrinal section of the Epistle to the Romans.

Continuation Of Paul's Personal Testimony (15:14-33)

At this point Paul resumes his personal testimony as an apostle to the Gentiles. You remember that he began this epistle in a very personal manner. Now he leaves the doctrinal section, and he picks up that personal note with which he began the epistle, in which he expressed the desire to visit Rome. "Now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you" ([Rom. 1:10](#)). Now listen to him.

And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another [[Rom. 15:14](#)].

This, I think, is one of the loveliest passages. Paul is offering in this verse a gentle apology for his frankness and boldness in speaking to the Romans in the doctrinal section. It was not because they were lacking in goodness and knowledge, but rather because they possessed these qualities that Paul was able to be so explicit. Isn't that wonderful? He gave us the Epistle to the Romans so that he could talk to us about these important issues. My friend, an understanding of the Epistle to the Romans is an essential part of your Christian growth. Every Christian should make an effort to know Romans, for this book will ground the believer in the faith. Paul is being very humble and sweet about his exhortations in this epistle. He is not lording it over God's heritage.

Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God,

That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost [[Rom. 15:15-16](#)].

When Paul says, "I have written," he is referring to this Epistle to the Romans. He is explaining the fact of his boldness by reminding the Romans that he is the apostle to the Gentiles. On the basis of this God-appointed office, which came to him through the grace of God, he is exercising that office in writing as he does to the Romans. He is ministering to them. This statement gives added weight to the inspiration of the writings of Paul. He adopts the language of the Levitical temple worship in describing himself as a minister preaching the gospel.

The Gentiles are "acceptable" -- apart from the Law or any religion -- through Christ as preached by Paul.

"Sanctified" -- the Holy Spirit indwelt the gentile believers, beginning with Cornelius. The sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit begins with Jew and Gentile the moment of regeneration when the Spirit of God takes up His abode within the believer. Paul gave the gospel, but God gave the Holy Spirit when they believed. It must be kept in mind that Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles in a very special sense. As a high priest, Paul offered up the Gentiles, making an offering unto God. It is difficult for us today to fathom the full significance of all this, and yet we as Gentiles have entered into all that this implies. My

friend, if you have never thanked God for the apostle Paul, you should thank Him right now. God gave Paul to us. For this reason we should read his Epistle to the Romans.

I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God [[Rom. 15:17](#)].

Paul had written boldly to the Romans and was rather apologetic about it because he recognized that these saints in Rome probably did not need his instructions. In spite of this, however, he wrote with confidence to them. There is no personal assumption in this, He is a servant of Christ Jesus and is doing His will. This is important to see. There is one thing that should never characterize a servant of God, and that is pride. We should never become officious, but rather take the position that we are merely serving the Lord Jesus Christ, and He is the One in charge.

For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed,

Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ [[Rom. 15:18-19](#)].

Paul is saying something very important in this passage. If we are to understand Paul, and especially whether he or Peter founded the church at Rome, we must pay close attention to what he says here. Paul is saying, "I will not take credit for the work of God that is being done by others -- especially among the Gentiles." Of course he couldn't take credit for what was accomplished on the Day of Pentecost, which was the beginning of the ministry that resulted in the gospel going to the Gentiles. He couldn't take credit for the gospel going to the first Gentiles. It was Simon Peter who took the gospel to the home of Cornelius. Paul will speak only of those things which Christ wrought by him. He had a peculiar ministry as the apostle to the Gentiles.

"Through mighty signs and wonders," which were the credentials of the apostles and the ministers in the early church. These were given to establish the church on the right foundation before a word of the New Testament had been written. Paul, speaking to the Ephesian believers, says that they ". . . are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone" ([Eph. 2:20](#)). He does not intend to say that the apostles are the foundation. There is no foundation but Christ: "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" ([1Cor. 3:11](#)). But the apostles are the ones who put down the foundation of Jesus Christ. That is what Paul is saying here.

Paul says that the gospel of Christ had come through him "unto Illyricum." Illyricum was a province of the Roman Empire next to Italy. It extended to the Adriatic Sea and the Danube River. Paul, you see, had preached by this time from Jerusalem to the province next to Rome. He had not quite reached Rome. By the way, we have no record of Paul's journey in this area. Undoubtedly he went many places that are not detailed for us. There are those who believe that Paul went to Spain. I believe this epistle reveals that he did go to Spain, and I think he also went to Great Britain because he covered the Roman Empire, as we shall see.

Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation:

But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand [[Rom. 15:20-21](#)].

Perhaps my translation will make these verses a little clearer: Indeed, in this way having made it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, in order that I might not be building upon another man's foundation: but as it is written, They shall see, those to whom there came no tidings of Him, and those who have not heard shall understand.

It was a point of honor with Paul -- not competition -- which caused him to go as a pioneer where the gospel had not been preached. Paul had a peculiar ministry. Paul did not minister where a church already existed or where others had gone. He was a true missionary, which is the meaning of the word evangelist in the New Testament. Paul never had a committee to do the groundwork ahead of him. When Paul entered a town, he was not given a welcome. The mayor did not greet him. If anyone greeted him, it was usually the chief of police, who generally arrested him and put him in jail. Since the apostles laid the foundation, the believers would have to be very careful to discern who the apostles were and to whom they were listening. Paul had the credentials God had given to the apostles. It is said of Paul and Barnabus, "Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands" ([Acts 14:3](#)). You see, these were the marks of the apostles and the early preachers of the gospel. They did not come with a New Testament in their hands -- it hadn't been written yet. They came with these credentials: mighty "signs and wonders."

Of course the day came when signs and wonders were no longer the identifying mark. The apostle John, near the end of his long life, wrote: "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed" ([2John 1:10](#)). Correct doctrine was the identifying mark for a man of God even then. And today the identifying mark is correct doctrine, not signs and wonders.

A tragic movement is going on at this writing. Coming to my desk is literally a flood of letters from people who are being carried away by fanaticism, by wrong teaching, and by false doctrine. Although there is a movement of the Holy Spirit today, there is also a movement of the Devil. Satan is busy. A great many people are being carried away and trapped by incorrect teaching. Paul has been so careful to emphasize the fact that the kingdom of God is not meat and drink. Well, the kingdom of God is not signs and wonders either. It is not any of these outward things. The Kingdom of God just happens to be righteousness. I hear of groups meeting and indulging in all kinds of sexual rites -- not living for God at all -- yet talking about certain signs that they demonstrate, such as speaking in tongues. My friend, it had better be a clean tongue. If the Lord has come into your life, He will clean you up. A clean tongue and one that declares the Word of God accurately is what a great many folk need today. Paul always ministered where the gospel had not previously gone. He was a true evangelist, a true missionary.

Since Paul said that he did not go where the gospel had been preached before, who is the founder of the church in Rome? He makes it very clear, both in his introduction and at this point, that he is the founder of the church in Rome.

In [Romans 16](#) we will be introduced to a group of people in Rome whom Paul knew. The record tells us that Paul led them to the Lord. He reached these people out in the Roman Empire and many of them gravitated to Rome. There they met together around the person of the Lord Jesus. I am sure they talked many times about their beloved pastor, Paul. He founded the church, not by going there in person, but by remote control -- you might say, by spiritual radar.

"To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand" seems to be Paul's life verse as a missionary. It is a quotation of [Isaiah 52:15](#) from the Septuagint version. Paul was thrilled to go and preach the gospel to those who were spiritually blind. After Paul had preached, some brother would say, "I understand, brother Paul. I will accept Christ as my Savior." My friend, there is no thrill equal to presenting Christ and having people turn to Him.

For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you [[Rom. 15:22](#)].

When Paul says that he had been "much hindered," you may be sure of one thing: he was much hindered. Many roadblocks had been put in his way.

But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you;

Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company [[Rom. 15:23-24](#)].

Paul makes it clear that he wants to take the gospel way out yonder and that he is coming to Rome. Now he says something unusually strange: "But now having no more place in these parts." There is a question about what Paul meant by this. Was he saying that there was no longer an opportunity to preach the gospel in the section of the Roman Empire where he was at that time? Had the doors completely closed to him? Had everyone been saved? Had every nook and cranny been evangelized? I used to take the position that the answer was "no" to these questions. However, now that I have visited the sites of the seven churches of Asia Minor, I'm not sure that I was right, because Paul and the other witnesses had been faithful, and the gospel had been sounded out through the entire area. The Word had gone out. Dr. Luke says that everyone, both Jew and Gentile, had heard the gospel. This does not mean that they all had turned to Christ, but they all had heard. Now Paul is looking for new territory. He has his eyes on the frontier of the empire. He says, "Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you." In other words, Rome was not his destination. He wanted to go to Spain. He had come from one end of the Roman Empire, and he wanted to go to the other end of the Roman Empire. He says, "For I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way witherward by you." You see, Rome was not his terminal. He wanted to go all the way to the other end of the empire.

The question is: Did Paul ever go to Spain? If he did, we have no record of it. But neither have we a record of his journey to Illyricum; we would not know he had been there if he had not mentioned it in [verse 19](#). Personally I believe that Paul did go to Spain and to the rest of the Roman Empire. My reason is a statement that he made when he came to the end of his life. He said, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" ([2Tim. 4:7](#)). Paul said he had finished his course. I don't think he would have said that if he had not been to Spain, because Spain was on his itinerary.

Paul wanted to go to Spain and he also wanted to go to Jerusalem.

But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints.

For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem [[Rom. 15:25-26](#)].

He wanted to go to Jerusalem to take a gift to the poor saints there, and he wanted to take it with his own hands. Why? Because with his own hands he had "wasted" the church at Jerusalem; he had led in the persecution of the believers in Jerusalem. Now it was in the heart of this great apostle to make up for that by taking a gift to them.

"A certain contribution." The Greek word which is translated "contribution" is koinonia, meaning "a fellowship." This word was used for everything that believers could share: Christ, the Word, prayer, the Lord's Supper, and material gifts. Christians have fellowship with God, with Christ, and with one another when they give. Fellowship is not just patting somebody on the back. The knife and fork clubs meet every week, and that is fellowship as far as they are concerned. But for a believer, fellowship is sharing the things of Christ. Paul is talking here about going to Jerusalem where previously he had persecuted the church. Now he wants to have fellowship with them; he wants to take a gift to them. In Acts we have the historical record of this: Paul said, "Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings" ([Acts 24:17](#)). This collection was very important to Paul. We find him writing about it in 2 Corinthians -- in fact, chapters 8 and 9 deal with it.

It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things [[Rom. 15:27](#)].

Paul makes it clear that it was a freewill offering. "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver" ([2Cor. 9:7](#)). This is the offering Paul collected. Paul makes it very clear that it not only was a freewill offering (they couldn't give any other way to please God), but he also enforces the fact that they had a moral obligation and debt to pay. The Gentiles had received the gospel from Israel. Our Lord Jesus said, "Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews" ([John 4:22](#)). You see, the gospel began in Jerusalem. Macedonia and Achaia were obligated to Jerusalem. Now some of the saints in Jerusalem were having financial difficulties, evidently because of persecution. Macedonia and Achaia could now pay a spiritual debt in the coin of the realm. This is foreign missions in reverse! It is the missionary church helping the home

church. This very thing may take place in our nation, by the way, in the not too far distant future!

When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain [[Rom. 15:28](#)].

You can see that this gift was on the heart of the great apostle Paul -- notice the zeal he had in taking it to Jerusalem. That trip, of course, placed him into the hands of his enemies who had him arrested. I disagree with some of my brethren who believe that Paul was out of the will of God during this time. I maintain that Paul was absolutely in the will of God when he went up to Jerusalem, as we have seen in the Book of Acts.

"And have sealed to them this fruit" is an awkward phrase for us and could mean no more than that he wanted a receipt for the offering. He secured to them the gift. It probably means that he wanted the Jerusalem church to see some fruits of their missionary efforts. I personally believe that if you are going to contribute money to some cause, you ought to know what it is doing. The area of Christian giving is one of grave danger today. I do not believe, Christian friend, that you should give to any work unless you know two things about it: (1) what it is doing, and (2) is it getting out the Word of God in a way that is effectual in hearts and lives?

And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ [[Rom. 15:29](#)].

This is Paul's stamp of approval on his prosperous journey to Rome. He went there according to the will of God and in the fullness of his apostolic office. God gave him divine insight into this trip. Paul is not out of the will of God in going to Jerusalem. Neither was he out of the will of God in going to Rome. It may not look like a prosperous journey, but God used it that way. It is very easy for God's children, when trouble comes and things look dark and doubtful, to say, "I must be out of the will of God." My friend, just because you have trouble and disturbed feelings does not mean that you are out of God's will. In fact, it may definitely mean you are in His will. If you are living in perfect calm today and nothing is happening, the chances are you are not in His will.

Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me [[Rom. 15:30](#)].

I have been dwelling a long time in this area. One reason is that this is a personal area, and Paul is laying bare his heart. The second reason is that we are seeing how Christianity functioned in the first century. We are seeing the practical side of Christianity. In the first part of Romans Paul gave us doctrine. Now Paul is putting that doctrine into practice.

This is one of the most solemn, earnest, and serious appeals of Paul for prayer that we find in the Bible. He says, "I beg of you, brethren, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that ye strive intensely with me in your prayers to God on behalf of me." Paul recognizes that he is facing danger and has come to a crisis in his ministry. Enemies are on every hand. Paul had reason to fear, as succeeding events proved. He is asking for prayer in a very wonderful way, "through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Paul realized that everything that was to come to him had to come through Jesus Christ. He asked the believers in Rome to join with him in prayer. He says, "I want all of you to pray through Christ -- He is our great Intercessor -- go through Him to God on my behalf."

By "through the love of the Spirit" he means that love is the fruit of the Spirit which joins all believers together. And, friend, we ought to pray for each other.

"That ye strive intensely for me." The Greek word for strive is tremendous. We get our English word agonize from it. Paul is saying, "Agonize with me."

"On behalf of me" -- he is asking for prayer for his personal safety that he might come in "the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ." Oh, my friend, how we need to pray like this -- not just praying by rote or by going over our prayer list hurriedly. For the apostle Paul prayer was with great agony, great exercise of soul. He laid hold of God. This kind of praying is so desperately needed today! You and I need people who know how to pray for us.

That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea;
and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of
the saints [[Rom. 15:31](#)].

In other words, this is Paul's prayer request, and it is twofold. His life was in jeopardy from unbelievers in Judea, the religious rulers. He wanted to be delivered from them. Secondly, the church in Jerusalem might be hesitant in accepting a gift from Gentiles, and he wanted them to accept it. My friend, both requests were answered. Somebody says, "Yes, but he was arrested." Right, but he was immediately put into the hands of the Romans and was enabled to appear before kings, and finally he actually appeared before the Caesar in Rome, which was the fulfillment of the will of God for the apostle Paul.

That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may
with you be refreshed [[Rom. 15:32](#)].

This is the conclusion of Paul's prayer request. The prayer was answered: his life was spared, the church in Jerusalem accepted the gift, he did come with joy to Rome -- in spite of the fact that he spent two years in jail at Caesarea, was shipwrecked on the way, and when he arrived in Rome he was in chains. Yet Paul came in the joy of the Holy Spirit. Oh, how all of us need that kind of joy in our lives!

Did Paul find rest and refreshment in Rome? Well, the answer is debatable. He did find all this and more beyond Rome and Spain when he entered the presence of Christ. He wrote near the end of his life to Timothy, his son in the faith: "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" ([2Tim. 4:6-8](#)).

This chapter concludes with Paul's benediction:

Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen [[Rom. 15:33](#)].

"The God of peace" shows that Paul experienced peace in prison, in chains, in storm, and in shipwreck. I pray that you and I might have that kind of peace in our lives.

Chapter 16

THEME: Commendation of Phebe; Christians in Rome greeted; conduct toward other Christians; Christians with Paul send greetings; benediction

In this final chapter of Romans the gospel walks in shoe leather in the first century of the Roman Empire. It thrills my heart to know that in the pagan Roman Empire there were Christians, witnesses for Christ, walking down the streets of those cities with the joy of the Lord in their hearts. I consider this one of the most revealing chapters that we have in the Epistle to the Romans. Paul has left the mountain peaks of doctrine to come down to the pavements of Rome. Here we see Christianity in action. The great doctrines which Paul proclaimed are not missiles for outer space. They are vehicles which actually operated on Roman roads. The gospel was translated into life and reality. This remarkable chapter should not be omitted or neglected in any study of Romans. William R. Newell has well said, "The sixteenth chapter is neglected by many to their own loss" (Romans Verse by Verse, p. 548).

There are thirty-five persons mentioned by name in this chapter. All were either believers living in Rome or they were believers who were with the apostle Paul -- he was probably in Corinth when he wrote this epistle. There is expressed a mutual love and tender affection which was a contradiction of Roman philosophy and practice. (Also, it is rather unlike some churches today!) These Christians were different. Little wonder that Rome marveled at these folk and exclaimed, "My, how these Christians love each other!"

Commendation Of Phebe (16:1-2)

The chapter begins with a commendation of Phebe, the woman who brought this epistle to Rome.

I command unto Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea:

That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also [[Rom. 16:1-2](#)].

Phebe is the first believer mentioned in this, another catalog of the heroes of the faith. She was a Gentile, as her name indicates. As I have already stated, there were many Gentiles in the church at Rome. She was named for the Greek goddess, Artemis or Diana, who in Greek mythology was the goddess of the moon, as her brother, Apollo, was the god of the sun. Many believers adopted new names at baptism, but Phebe kept her heathen name for some reason.

Phebe was the bearer of the Epistle to the Romans. Apparently she was a very prominent woman in the church, which means she was a woman of ability. She is called a "servant of the church which is at Cenchrea." Cenchrea is the eastern seaport of Corinth. When I stood at the ruins of ancient Corinth, I looked down and saw in the distance Cenchrea. On

that clear day, it looked much closer than the eight or nine miles it is said to be. Apparently Paul wrote the Epistle to the Romans while he was at Corinth, and Phebe, who may have been a woman of means or engaged in business, took it with her to Rome. She is called a servant of the church, which means she was a deaconess. The Greek word diakonos is the same word used for deacon. It reveals the fact that women occupied a very prominent place in the early church.

It is my feeling that we would not be seeing women today occupying the position of pastors in the church (which is forbidden by Scripture) if they had been given their rightful position in the church. I think they should be deaconesses in the church and that they should sit on an equality with any other board of the church. The church needs some of the insights and sensibilities that women possess. God has made a woman finer than a man, just as a watch is finer than an automobile. She has been given a sense that man doesn't have. For instance, she can watch a woman who is a complete stranger to her, and in five minutes she knows a great deal about her simply by observing her dress and her manner. Those of us who belong to the male side of the human race appear stupid at a time like that. We can see if she is good looking or not, but that is the extent of our observation. The church needs the insight that a woman has.

Paul apparently put into Phebe's hand this Epistle to the Romans rather than trusting it to public transportation. Rome did have mail service, but it was slow. Paul, you see, is going back to Jerusalem, and Phebe brings his epistle with her to Rome.

"I commend unto you Phebe our sister" -- Paul commends her to the believers there at Rome. She is the first woman mentioned in this final chapter.

Christians In Rome Greeted (16:3-15)

Now Paul sends his greetings to quite a list of Christian folk.

Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus:

Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles [[Rom. 16:3-4](#)].

At this time there were gentile churches, you see, and I believe the church at Rome was largely gentile, made up of many races. It was integrated for sure.

"Priscilla and Aquila" were a Jewish couple. How had Paul met them, and in what way were they his helpers? Well, there had been a wave of anti-Semitism that had swept over the city of Rome, and Priscilla and Aquila had had to leave. They came to the city of Corinth while Paul was there and set up shop. Corinth was a good commercial center, and Paul was also plying his trade there. Since they were all tentmakers, this drew them together (see [Acts 18:1-3](#)), and Paul led them to the Lord. Then they were with Paul at Ephesus. Perhaps they had gone over there to open up a branch store. In [Acts 18:26](#), we find that they were able to be helpful to Apollos: "And he [Apollos] began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." Notice that when we first meet them it is "Aquila and Priscilla." Now here in Romans it is Priscilla and Aquila.

Why are the names reversed? Well, I think here is a case when the woman became dominant in spiritual matters. Spiritually she became the leader, although they were both outstanding workers for Christ.

Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my well-beloved Epaphroditus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ [[Rom. 16:5](#)].

The local church met in private homes at the very beginning. (See [Acts 12:12](#); [1Cor. 16:19](#); [Col. 4:15](#); [Philem. 1:2](#).) Sanday writes, "There is no decisive evidence until the third century of the existence of special buildings used for churches." It is the belief of many folk today, and I have found this belief for years, that the church which began in the home will return to meeting in the home. Many of these great big buildings we call churches, with great steeples on them, are nothing more than a pile of brick, stone, and mortar. They are mausoleums, not living churches that contain a real, living body of believers. The church was never intended to be spoken of as a building. For the first three centuries the church was the body of believers and met in homes like that of Aquila and Priscilla.

Epaphroditus is a Greek name meaning "praised." Evidently he was Paul's first convert in the Roman province of Achaia.

Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us [[Rom. 16:6](#)].

Mary is a Jewish name, the same as Miriam, meaning "rebelliousness." She "bestowed much labour on us" means that she labored to the point of exhaustion. What a change had taken place in her life! Before becoming a believer, she was in rebellion, but now she "knocks herself out" for the sake of other believers, because she is now obedient to Christ.

Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellowprisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me [[Rom. 16:7](#)].

Andronicus is a Greek name, and the name has been identified with a slave.

Junia is a Roman name and can be either masculine or feminine. Paul calls them "my fellow countrymen," which may mean that they belonged to the tribe of Benjamin as did Paul. It does not necessarily mean close blood relationship.

Paul says, they were "my fellow prisoners." Evidently Paul had met them in one of the numerous prisons of the Roman Empire. These two were well-known to the apostles and were held in high regard by them. Paul had not led them to Christ, as is the natural assumption, for they were in Christ before he was.

The church in Rome was founded by Paul under most unusual circumstances. He had met Aquila and Priscilla in the Corinthian agora, the marketplace, and then he met these two men in jail. These had then gone to Rome and formed the church there.

Greet Amplias my beloved in the Lord.

Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ, and Stachys my beloved [[Rom. 16:8-9](#)].

Amplias is a common slave name and occurs in the tombs of the early Christians in the catacombs, always in a place of honor. He evidently was one of Paul's converts and dear to his heart.

Urbane means "city bred." In other words, his name actually means "city-slicker." This was also a common slave name, and it may mean that he was brought up in the city rather than in the country. He is identified as a real worker among believers.

Stachys has been found listed in the royal household. It is a masculine name. He was beloved not only to Paul but to the church.

Salute Apelles approved in Christ. Salute them which are of Aristobulus' household [[Rom. 16:10](#)].

Apelles is the approved one. His is either a Greek or a Jewish name -- the name was a common one among the Jews. He had stood some outstanding test. Tradition identifies him as bishop either of Smyrna or Heracleia.

Aristobulus has been identified by Bishop Lightfoot as the grandson of Herod the Great. Or possibly he was a slave who took the name of his master -- we can't be sure of this.

Salute Herodian my kinsman. Greet them that be of the household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord [[Rom. 16:11](#)].

Herodian was evidently a Jew, as Paul calls him a fellow countryman. The name suggests the Herod family. He may have been a slave who adopted the name of the family to which he belonged.

Narcissus is the name of a well-known freedman put to death by Agrippina. The one whose name appears here was probably a slave who formerly belonged to him and had taken his name.

Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord [[Rom. 16:12](#)].

Tryphena and Tryphosa are euphonious names that mean "delicate" and "dainty." I imagine these two little ladies were old maid sisters who came to know Christ. They may have been women of means, and they had supported the apostle Paul. Paul says that they labored "in the Lord" -- they were real workers in the church at Rome.

"The beloved Persis" is another woman who "laboured much in the Lord." Persis is the name of a freedwoman, and her position may have enabled her to do more than the preceding two sisters.

Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine [[Rom. 16:13](#)].

Although this man seems to stand in the shadows in this chapter, actually we can know a great deal about him -- even to the color of his hair! His name means "red." Red was the name by which he was called. However, there were many red-haired folk; it was not his

hair that made him unusual. The thing that marks him out is the phrase that follows, "chosen in the Lord." I love that. "But," you may say, "were not the others in this chapter chosen in the Lord also?" Yes, they were all wonderful saints, but this man was outstanding. Perhaps a better translation would be "distinguished in the Lord." He was a great saint of God.

That Rufus was prominent in the church is inferred in the reference to his father. When John Mark wrote his Gospel, he wrote it primarily for the Romans. In it he mentions the incident of a man by the name of Simon carrying the cross of Christ. "And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross" ([Mark 15:21](#)). The Roman soldiers that day saw Jesus falling under the cross. Looking over the crowd they shouted, "Here!" to a big double-fisted fellow, Simon of Cyrene. "You come here and carry it." And carry it he did -- an act that has made him immortal. John Mark, writing to Rome, identifies Simon for them by adding, "the father of Alexander and Rufus" -- all the saints at Rome would know Rufus because he was outstanding in the church.

Will you notice further that Paul's greeting includes the mother of Rufus. "Salute Rufus . . . and his mother and mine." While we know nothing of the mother of Paul the apostle and nothing of his father, we learn here of a godly woman in the city of Jerusalem, the wife of Simon the Cyrenian, who was like a mother to the apostle Paul. You may recall that the first time Paul came to Jerusalem following his conversion, the Christians feared him. They were unconvinced that this powerful Pharisee was genuine; they suspected trickery. Yet the mother of Rufus took Paul in, "You just come in and stay with Rufus in his room." Looking back to that time, Paul writes concerning her, "She is Rufus' mother, but she is mine also." What a lovely tribute to this warmhearted Christian mother!

Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them [[Rom. 16:14](#)].

These are all just names to us, but Paul knew them. Probably he had led them to Christ.

Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them [[Rom. 16:15](#)].

Here is another group of believers who were in the church there in Rome.

Conduct Toward Other Christians (16:16-20)

Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you [[Rom. 16:16](#)].

This was the formal greeting in Paul's time -- I don't recommend it for today!

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.

For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple [[Rom. 16:17-18](#)].

Paul puts in this word of warning. We would do well to heed this warning also, my beloved.

For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple discerning evil [[Rom. 16:19](#)].

You see, their faith came abroad also, but the faith is manifested in obedience.

"Wise unto that which is good" means they must be instructed in the Word of God.

"Simple concerning evil" means without a mixture of evil. To the Corinthians Paul said, "Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men" ([1Cor. 14:20](#)).

And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.
The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen [[Rom. 16:20](#)].

It is "the god of peace" who will put down Satan shortly. In the meantime we are to resist the Devil, be sober and vigilant.

Christians With Paul Send Greetings (16:21-24)

Now Paul sends greetings from those who were with him as he was writing this Epistle to the Romans.

Timotheus my workfellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you [[Rom. 16:21](#)].

All of these were companions of Paul. They send greetings to their fellow believers in Rome.

I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord [[Rom. 16:22](#)].

Paul, you see, had an amanuensis, a secretary, to write his letters. (The Epistle to the Galatians is the exception.)

Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus a brother [[Rom. 16:23](#)].

Paul was staying in the home of Gaius, and Gaius wanted to send his salutations also.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen [[Rom. 16:24](#)].

Benediction (16:25-27)

Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began [[Rom. 16:25](#)].

"The mystery" means that it had not been revealed in the Old Testament. It refers to the present age when God is taking both Jew and Gentile and fashioning them into one body, the church.

But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets,
according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made
known to all nations for the obedience of faith [[Rom. 16:26](#)].

Here we see the obedience of faith. When you trust Christ, you will obey Him, my friend. The Lord Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" ([John 10:27](#)). Obedience is the work and fruit of faith.

My favorite hymn is "Trust and Obey" by John H. Sammis:

When we walk with the Lord
In the Light of His Word,
What a glory He sheds on our way!
While we do His good will,
He abides with us still,
And with all who will trust and obey.
Then in fellowship sweet
We will sit at His feet,
Or we'll walk by His side in the way;
What He says we will do,
Where He sends we will go --
Never fear, only trust and obey.
Trust and obey, for there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen
[[Rom. 16:27](#)].

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